■ Super! / D2

Celebrities who have been to Maldives and live to tell the story

■ News / A2

AFP chief abolishes logistics command effective April 1

■ Sports / A25

Pacquiao too strong, swear awed sparmates

■ Business / B1

DOF plans to sell 25-ha veterans hospital's golf course in QC

Tanong ng Bayan / A20

Price war ng telcos, pabor nga ba sa publiko?

CELLCARD KADA ARAW,
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It's a sin not to pay taxes, Church, faithful reminded

TAX EVASION & CORRUPTION ARE BOTH SINS!

By Michelle V. Remo

PRESSURED to win the battle against the culture of tax evasion, newly appointed Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima has asked the Catholic Church to re-

IT'S A SIN/ A21

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New names in billionaires' list but Bill Gates still No. 1

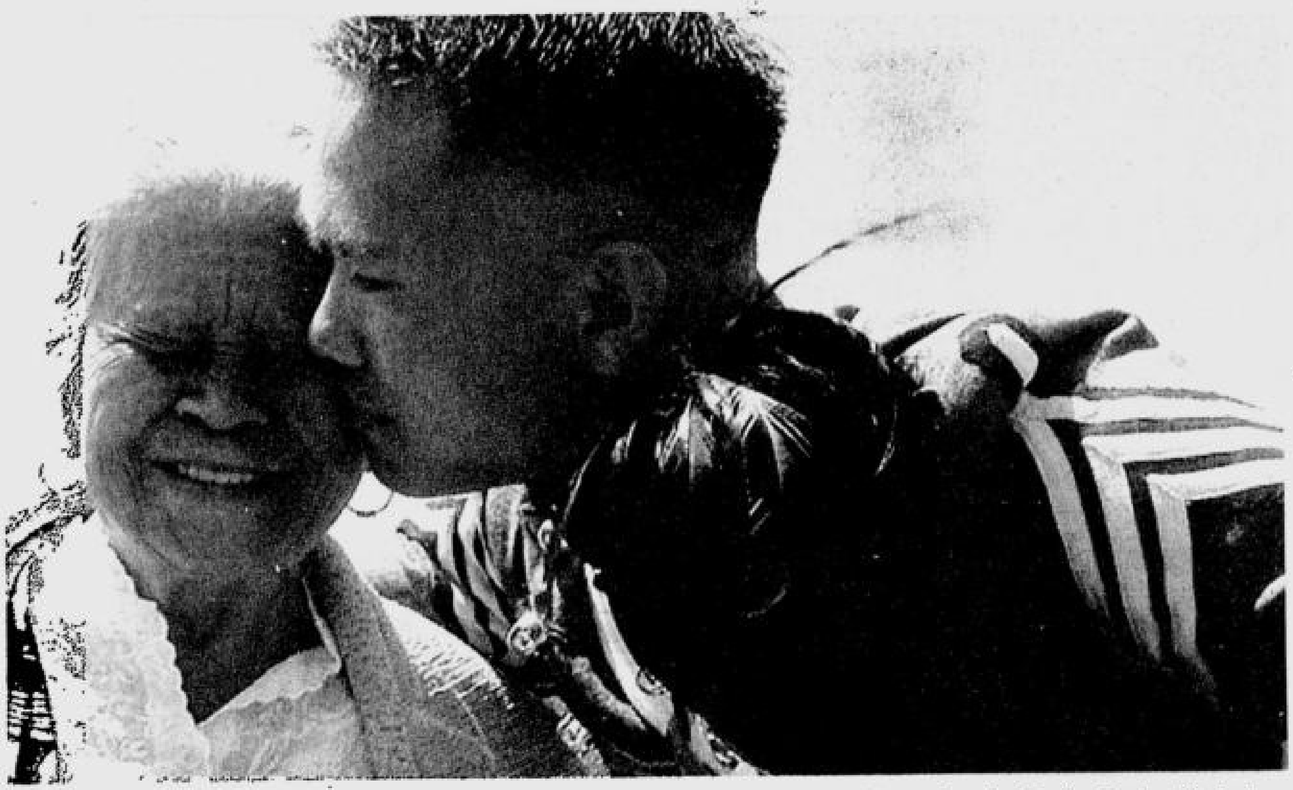
NEW YORK—Thanks to a surge in demand for steel, the Internet and Scandinavian sofas, there are some new names among the very richest of the world's billionaires.

Indian steel mogul Lakshmi Mittal, Mexican telecom magnate Carlos Slim Helu and Ikea founder Ingvar Kamprad of Sweden knocked several Wal-Mart heirs down a few notches on

NEW NAMES/ A21

Rush to save Bobby on

Tarongoy captors' deadline expected to lapse 4 a.m. today



GRANDMA'S THRILLED: Second Lt. Alvin Cardenas from Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya, hugs his grandmother Paulina Sunico, 84, during the Philippine Military Academy's pre-graduation rites on Friday at the Borromeo Field in Fort del Pilar, Baguio City. President Arroyo will address the "Sanlingan" Class of 2005 during the graduation ceremonies today. TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NOTHERN LUZON BUREAU

By Volt Contreras, Jerome Aning and Anthony S. Allada
PDI Mindanao Bureau

FOR THE second time in eight months, the government scrambled yesterday to try and save a Filipino hostage in Iraq, as the final hours of a deadline set by the captors of Roberto "Bobby" Tarongoy dangerously ticked away.

As Foreign Undersecretary Rafael Seguis and his Team Iraq pursued talks with intermediaries, Tarongoy's family in Davao appealed to the government to yield to the kidnappers' demand, or at least secure an extension of the deadline.

In a video aired at 4 a.m. on Tuesday, the gunmen gave the government four days to comply. Based on the video's time of airplay, that deadline would lapse at 4 a.m. in Manila today.

In the video footage aired by the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera Arab television network on Tuesday, Tarongoy was garbed in an orange outfit, the same clothes worn by some hostages previously executed by Iraqi gunmen.

Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Gilberto Asuque maintained that "we're not looking at any deadline but we remain focused on efforts" to establish contact with Tarongoy's captors in Iraq.

He said Seguis and his team continued to meet Iraqi government officials as well as ethnic, religious and community leaders in a bid to save Tarongoy, who has been held captive for four and a half months.

As reported by Filipino diplo-

RUSH/ A21

DND: ₱593-M Minimi deal will 'not prosper'

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE DEFENSE department yesterday said the P593.3-million contract for the purchase of some 1,700 Minimi assault weapons would "not prosper" because it did not meet the requirements of the law.

Defense Undersecretary Jose Santos told a Senate committee the Department of National Defense was looking at the comparative prices of other assault weapons in the market and studying other modes of purchase as an alternative to a direct or negotiated contract with the Belgian firm Fabrique Nacional-Herstal.

The committee on national defense and security, chaired by Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, is looking at the FNH deal after allegations of possible overprice. The Armed Forces had agreed to buy the guns at $5,088.20 per unit while the United States was able to buy the same weapon at $2,401.50 apiece.

The AFP in 2002 bought an initial shipment of 402 Minimi units from FNH for a total price of P117.4 million. The weapons were delivered in March 2003.

In September 2004, the AFP approved a second deal with FNH for 1,700 units for P593.3 million.

Santos said the P593.3-million FNH contract for the supply of the second batch of the Minimi Squad Automatic Weapons did not meet the requirement under the Govern-

DND/ A6

SEC, SC leaders in fighting corruption

By Fe Zamora

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) topped the list of government agencies most sincere in fighting corruption, while the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas was the No. 1 agency in overall performance.

These were the results of two separate surveys released yesterday by the Coalition Against Corruption (CAC), an alliance that supports counter-corruption projects.

The SEC was followed by the Supreme Court on the list of agencies most sincere in fighting graft, while the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) ranked second best performer, according to the survey results.

The results of the two surveys conducted among businessmen seem like a ray of sunshine for Filipinos starved for good news after the Hongkong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd. (PERC) earlier this week released the results of its own survey ranking the Philippines the second most corrupt country in Asia.

Indonesia was ranked most corrupt in the PERC survey of more than 900 expatriate residents in the region.

"The [PERC] report is extremely disappointing but we should also take this as a challenge that we really need to work together to fight corruption, " CAC chair Ra-

SEC/ A21

'Nardong Putik' no hero to this Cavite farmer group

By Jerry E. Esplanada

SILANG, Cavite—A group of tenant farmers in this coffee, pineapple and banana-producing upland municipality fear that their apprehensions over the appointment of former Sen. Ramon Revilla as chair of the Public Estates Authority have come true.

Early last month, about 300 armed men swooped down on Barangay Cabangaan here where 37 tenant families have been locked in a dispute for almost three years with Revilla, the owner of the 25-hectare property that they claim to have been tilling for more than 50 years.

According to Teodoro Garcia, the leader of the Samahan ng Magsasaka sa Cabangaan (Samaca), the armed men, many of whom were from the Cavite provincial police force, did not do anything overtly violent but were clearly sent to harass them.

"They went around the barangay telling us to leave. They threatened to demolish our homes," Garcia said in Filipino.

NARDONG/ A8

One more kid dies; criminal investigation launched

By Chito A. Fuentes and Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—The body count in the Wednesday food poisoning of schoolchildren in Mabini, Bohol, rose to 27 yesterday with the death of a 13-year-old.

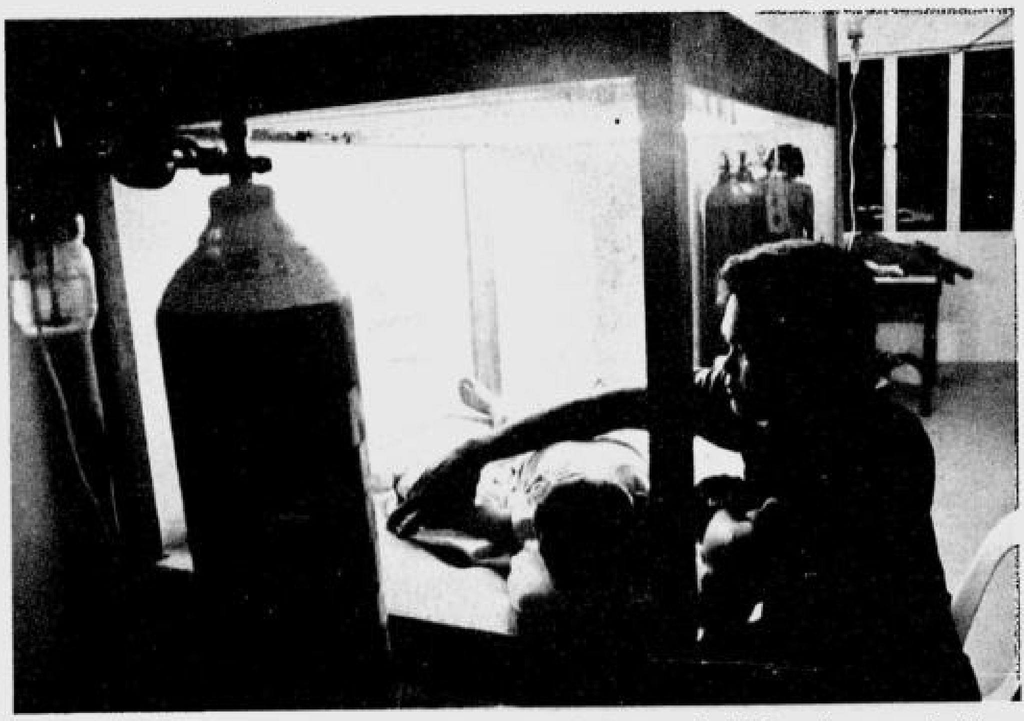
Jenylen Vallente was pronounced dead at 5:15 p.m. at the Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital (GCGMH) in this city. She had earlier been confined at the Garcia Memorial Hospital in Talibon town.

Dr. Nenita Po, GCGMH chief of hospital, confirmed the cause of death as food poisoning.

Earlier in the day, six more children were buried in Mabini, where authorities launched a criminal investigation into the food poisoning blamed on cassava sweets sold outside the San Jose Elementary School.

Blood and food samples and traces from a cooking oil container have been sent to Manila for analysis.

ONE MORE/ A8



TENDER LOVING CARE. Lino Miano tends to his son, Lino Jr., 7, at a makeshift intensive care unit at the Garcia Memorial Hospital in Talibon, Bohol. The child is one of 105 taken ill due to cassava food poisoning in his school in the nearby town of Mabini. Twenty-seven children have died. AP

'She had seen her friends die'

MABINI, Bohol—The children who survived mass poisoning and watched their classmates die may be scarred for life because there are no trauma experts and counselors available in this rural town of 27,000.

This is what their teachers fear—and it is clear in the dozens of survivors still wondering why they lived when others did not.

One of them, Gina Inoc, 12, lies quietly in a tiny bed at the Garcia Memorial Hospital in Talibon town along with 47 other children brought back by doctors from the brink of death after ingesting caramelized cassava fries—their favorite snack.

Inoc refuses to acknowledge visitors and just stares into space as

SHE HAD/ A8

₱946-M plunder case filed vs Pagcor chair, 5 others

By Nelson Flores and TJ Burgonio

PLUNDERWATCH yesterday filed a P946-million plunder case against Efraim Genuino, the chair of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., and five other Pagcor officials in connection with the alleged "sweetheart deal" involving two Pagcor casinos in the Cebu-based Waterfront hotels.

The case stemmed from the alleged payment of overpriced rentals made by Pagcor for the casinos that the state gaming firm operates at two Waterfront Casino hotels in the cities of Cebu and Lapu-lapu on Mactan island.

Edward King, the Pagcor spokesperson, sought to downplay the suit brought by the PlunderWatch against Genuino and other Pagcor officials.

"The issues are old and [have been] answered. I don't know why they're reviving it. Maybe they just want to throw Pagcor into disarray," King said in a phone interview.

In her complaint filed with the Office of the Ombudsman, PlunderWatch convenor Carolina Pagaduan-Araullo alleged that the deal was grossly disadvantageous to the government.

Araullo said that Pagcor had contracted to rent space at the

P946-M PLUNDER/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/03/12/05

Second FRONTPAGE

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Pump prices up anew by 50¢/liter

FOUR NEW oil players today raised anew the pump prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos per liter.

Eastern Petroleum Corp., Flying V, Seaoil Petroleum Corp. and Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. said the increase, the second in two weeks, was due to the rising costs of crude and finished products in the world market.

Eastern and Flying V implemented their price hikes at 12:01 a.m. today, while Unioil and Seaoil adjusted their pump prices at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., respectively.

"The increase is to partially recover from the continued increase in international prices, which have reached historic highs this week," said Seaoil president Glenn Yu.

He said that oil companies will try to implement the price adjustments on a weekly basis and will continue to provide discounts to public transports.

As of March 10, the benchmark Dubai crude had reached an average of $44.13 a barrel, almost $5 higher than last month's average of $39.87 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products also surged to a March 1-10 average of $59.11 a barrel from only $54.27 a barrel last month.

MOPS-based diesel likewise soared to a March average of $65.73 a barrel, more than $10 higher than the February average of $55.63 a barrel.

Oil refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and major finished product importers Caltex Philippines Inc. and Total (Philippines) Corp., have yet to announce their own price adjustments as of press time.

The Department of Energy earlier warned of more frequent pump price increases due to the soaring costs of crude and refined petroleum products in the world market. *Abigail L. Ho*

STARTING APRIL 1

LogCom abolished

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

NO MORE fooling around with military funds.

Starting April Fool's Day, the controversial and graft-ridden Logistics Command (LogCom) of the Armed Forces of the Philippines will cease to exist, AFP chief of staff Gen. Efren Abu announced yesterday.

"Effective April 1, I'm abolishing the Logistics Command. I'm transferring their responsibilities to the major services," Abu told reporters.

Abu said LogCom's abolition was "part of our long-term defense program to reform the armed forces," which would transform the general headquarters into a "policy-making body" while transferring its operational functions to the field.

LogCom handles the procurement of all military supplies and materiel and provides general support services to all branches of the military. It is based at Camp Aguinaldo, the general headquarters of the military.

At a forum in Makati City yesterday, Abu said the functions of LogCom will be handed over to the counterpart units in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.

"So instead of the general headquarters procuring for the units of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, they will be the ones doing this."

Operational concerns like supplies should be left to the concerned unit, he said.

Abu admitted he was fed up with reports of corruption at LogCom.

"*Alam nyo pag sinabing* LogCom *kahit kami sa* Armed Forces *medyo hindi magandang pakinggan. Nakakasawa na* (LogCom is not that well regarded by even us at the Armed Forces. It's become tiresome)."

He also hinted that other major offices that are a source of corruption will also be abolished. He did not elaborate.

Abu said a review of general headquarters offices is continuing. "We are removing the large offices that are a source of corruption."

Earlier, Abu abolished the Office of the Military Comptroller (J6) whose former comptroller, retired Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia, is facing graft charges for alleged ill-gotten wealth. Garcia is now being tried before civilian and military courts for corruption.

Currently headed by Brig. Gen. Roberto Sylim, LogCom also has several field offices nationwide.

Soldiers assigned to LogCom would return to their mother units while civilian employees would be reassigned to other offices, said Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, AFP press information chief.

He said LogCom will be "phased out" within six months starting April 1 since it still has some pending procurement orders, including the procurement of uniforms and boots for paramilitary Cafgu members.

Pascual said LogCom's abolition would help lessen graft in the military since "it removes another layer (of bureaucracy)." *With AFP report*

There will be chaos in the streets, party-list lawmaker warns

A PARTY-LIST legislator has warned that there will be chaos in the streets should the government push through with a proposal to allow oil companies to increase fuel prices by 50 centavos every week.

"*Dadanak ang dugo*," said Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran, who raised the specter of street riots, transport strikes and economic chaos.

"It's inevitable that with oil price hikes, there will be increases in the rates of electricity as well," he said.

Beltran said Malacañang should not delude itself into believing that pegging the fuel price hikes at 50 centavos per week could pacify the public.

A weekly increase would be a "nightmare" for everyone because "there's no stopping manufacturers and stores from jacking their prices," he said.

Instead of negotiating for limited oil price hikes, the Arroyo administration was giving the "Big 3" oil firms the license to continue hiking oil prices, he said.

Beltran called on Congress to scrap the Oil Deregulation Law by passing House Bill No. 1065 which is pending with the committee on the revision of laws. The bill, co-authored by Beltran, seeks the repeal of the Downstream Oil Deregulation Act of 1998 and the nationalization of the oil industry.

He said deregulation had only worsened problems in the energy sector and further victimized consumers.

He said the Filipino people can no longer bear these attacks on their economic welfare.

"People are already clamoring for President Arroyo's head because of the tax measures she's been pushing," he said. *Michael Lim Ubac*

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GMA ready to risk Church support over population program

By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Christian V. Esguerra

ARROYO

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo will not back down on her population control program even if means losing the support of one her government's biggest backers—the Catholic Church.

"She has a job to do and she is doing it," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in reply to a question on whether Ms Arroyo feared losing the support of the Church that remains critical of the government's "Ligtas Buntis" program.

Despite the deafening tirades from the pulpit, Bunye stressed that the President showed no signs of wavering from her population control policy being promoted by the Department of Health through local government units nationwide.

"(Ms Arroyo) is firm on her policy and this has been enunciated before—the President provides the policy direction at the national level (but) the method of implementation might be different from one LGU to another," Bunye said.

The government has toughened up its population control program from its previous moderate stand of natural birth control methods in response to economists' warnings that high population growth rate would curtail economic growth.

The Church has taken a strong stance against what it believes to be an immoral policy. Some priests have even refused to give Holy Communion to health workers in the Ligtas Buntis program.

Bunye refused to engage in a word war with the Church, expressing doubts on whether the refusal to give communion to health workers was an official policy of the Catholic Church.

Bunye also veered away from reacting to Bohol Bishop Christian Noel's claim that the food poisoning of 26 school children was a "sign" from God on the government's population control program.

"They are entitled to their opinion, but we have our population policy and it will be implemented," he said.

Meanwhile, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said that by opposing the government's Ligtas Buntis program, the Church had inadvertently promoted it.

"As a result of the controversy, people sat up and took notice. It gave the campaign free advertising. So it's been very positive," Dayrit said yesterday in a press conference.

The campaign which the Church denounced as a sugar-coated population control program had, in fact, reached 25 percent of the targeted two million Filipinos in just two weeks, according to the health secretary.

A total of 516,906 men and women of reproductive age had been identified since the campaign was silently launched two weeks ago, he said, citing reports from the regions.

Of the number, 10 percent of 160,343 were given actual services by health workers scattered nationwide, he said.

Four percent or 23,748 of them were pregnant women while six percent or 53,042 were adolescents, he said.

Seven percent of the total "serviced" people were given artificial family planning services while 1.4 percent or 11,938 received natural family planning services, he said.

"Considering the odds the campaign has been up against since it started, we are happy that in just a couple of weeks, Ligtas Buntis has already achieved so much," Dayrit said in a statement.

"It's very heartening because you can see here that as a result of the campaign, there is an upsurge (in the demand for) all types of methods—natural, artificial, even permanent, for those who feel that their families are complete," he said.

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Solano, Nueva Vizcaya

GERRY T. ADANTE
Matina, Davao City

EDWIN DEGORIO
Surigao City

ANTHONY ABESAMIS
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HONDA WAVE ALPHA WINNERS

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Manggahan, Pasig City

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Corporal files murder raps vs Abra governor, colonel

By Norman Bordadora

A CORPORAL yesterday filed a complaint of frustrated murder against Abra Gov. Vicente Valera and the commander of the Abra-based 41st Infantry Battalion for allegedly ordering his killing and that of a fellow soldier on Dec. 22, 2004.

In the complaint, Cpl. Eduardo Barcelona said Valera and Col. Noel Mislang were responsible for the ambush attack that left him injured and Cpl. Antonio Rosqueta dead. "They wanted us dead because we chose not to do what they wanted us to do," he said after filing the complaint before the Ombudsman.

Barcelona named the attackers—Mauro Dorwin and Florencio Baharin—as respondents in his complaint.

He said they were civilian intelligence agents closely associated with Mislang. Valera often hired them for "hits," he quoted Dorwin as saying earlier.

Barcelona, a member of the Army Special Forces, said Mislang ordered the ambush on him and Rosqueta after they failed to kill Mayor Cecilia Luna of Lagayan, Abra, and her two sons.

He said they had earlier been given at least P20,000 for surveillance and planning and promised P300,000 for each of the Lunas killed.

It was the second murder complaint lodged at the Office of the Ombudsman against Valera and Mislang in a week.

On Wednesday, Mayor Luna herself filed a complaint of attempted murder against the two officials. She cited the sworn statements earlier submitted by the two soldiers to intelligence authorities in Fort Bonifacio.

Valera denied the accusation and said Luna's complaint would give him the opportunity to clear his name.

'Special op'

This was what Barcelona said in his account:

In April 2004, Mislang said he was sending the two soldiers on a "special operation" to kill a certain Cecile Luna and members of her family.

Mislang said Valera wanted the Lunas dead for supporting the New People's Army in Abra.

The two soldiers disregarded the order after learning during surveillance that Luna was an incumbent mayor—a decision that angered Mislang and Valera.

"I hope they'd stop using ordinary soldiers [in their plots]. Enlisted men only want to earn a living," Barcelona said.

Asked how he could be certain that Valera was in on the plots to kill Luna and to silence him and Rosqueta, Barcelona said the two of them usually escorted Mislang whenever the latter met with the governor.

After those meetings, Mislang would supposedly brief them on the governor's instructions and promises of a reward.

'Everything OK'

Barcelona said that after conducting surveillance on one of Luna's sons, Jenrick, on July 1, 2004, he and Rosqueta personally met Valera.

He said he heard Mislang tell Valera, "Everything's OK, boss," and expressed the belief that the colonel was referring to their being able to track Jenrick's movements and to plan the ambush.

Later, with their continued failure to kill any of the Lunas, the two soldiers found themselves declared absent without leave, Barcelona said.

He said they were also told by fellow soldiers that their commander wanted them dead.

Deciding to come clean, they went to the Army headquarters last December and submitted their affidavits to the intelligence office.

On Dec. 22, Barcelona and Rosqueta were invited by Dorwin to a birthday party in Aurora, Isabela. But they found no such gathering when they got there, he said.

It was then that Baharin, who was with Dorwin, allegedly shot Rosqueta in the head.

Barcelona said he managed to flee after checking on Rosqueta. But he sustained six gunshot wounds.

BARCELONA: They wanted us dead because we chose not to do what they wanted us to do.
MITCH MAURICIO

Lighters out in US planes

NOW seen as a potential threat to air travel security, lighters will soon be banned onboard aircraft to and out of the United States beginning April 14, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Quoting a Feb. 28 press statement by the US Transportation Security Administration, the DFA said lighters have been added to the list of items "prohibited beyond airport checkpoints" in the States.

The inclusion was by virtue of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Act of 2004 which US President George W. Bush signed last December, the department said yesterday.

Covered by the ban a re lighters of various types—butane, absorbed fuel (Zippo-type), electric or battery-operated, and novelty lighters.

GMA endorses int'l meet to prevent conflict

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE PRESIDENT has expressed support for an international gathering of civil society groups that met in Manila to discuss ways to prevent conflict.

Ms Arroyo told members of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) that she would instruct the country's permanent representative to the United Nations to help bring their proposals to the said international body, according to a statement read by Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Ging Deles on Thursday during the closing ceremonies of the GPPAC regional conference.

"Let us create history today by allowing the Philippines to serve as the first country in Southeast Asia to support this partnership at the halls of the United Nations, in the conferences and meetings you plan with our agencies within ASEAN and the larger international community. We are humbly honored to be the first 'South' country to thus signify support for GPPAC," the President said in her statement.

Ms Arroyo said she was happy that the GPPAC was supported by the UN Secretary General and at least nine governments, mostly from the European union, the statement said.

NGO representatives from ASEAN countries, as well as observers from European nations participated in the four-day GPPAC conference in Manila. Its aim was to come up with ways to establish mechanisms that would allow the civil society, the government and the UN to work together to prevent, and not just simply stop, conflict.

"The Philippine government is totally behind this paradigm shift from 'prevention' instead of just 'reaction' to conflict situations. Our country is the locus of a number of lingering conflicts—including the longest running communist insurgency in the region," Ms Arroyo said in her statement.

She also noted the displacement of families in Sulu due to the hostilities between the military and local armed groups, saying that in response, the government put in place a "multi-track roadmap."

Correction

IN THE story "Another Bayan leader killed" that appeared on Page A6 in the March 10 issue, the victim, Romeo Sanchez, should have been identified as the coordinator of the party-list group Bayan Muna in the Ilocos region—not a leader of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan).

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to Gerry Lirio, city editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City; fax Nos. 897-4793/94; e-mail addresses:glirio@inquirer.com.ph and daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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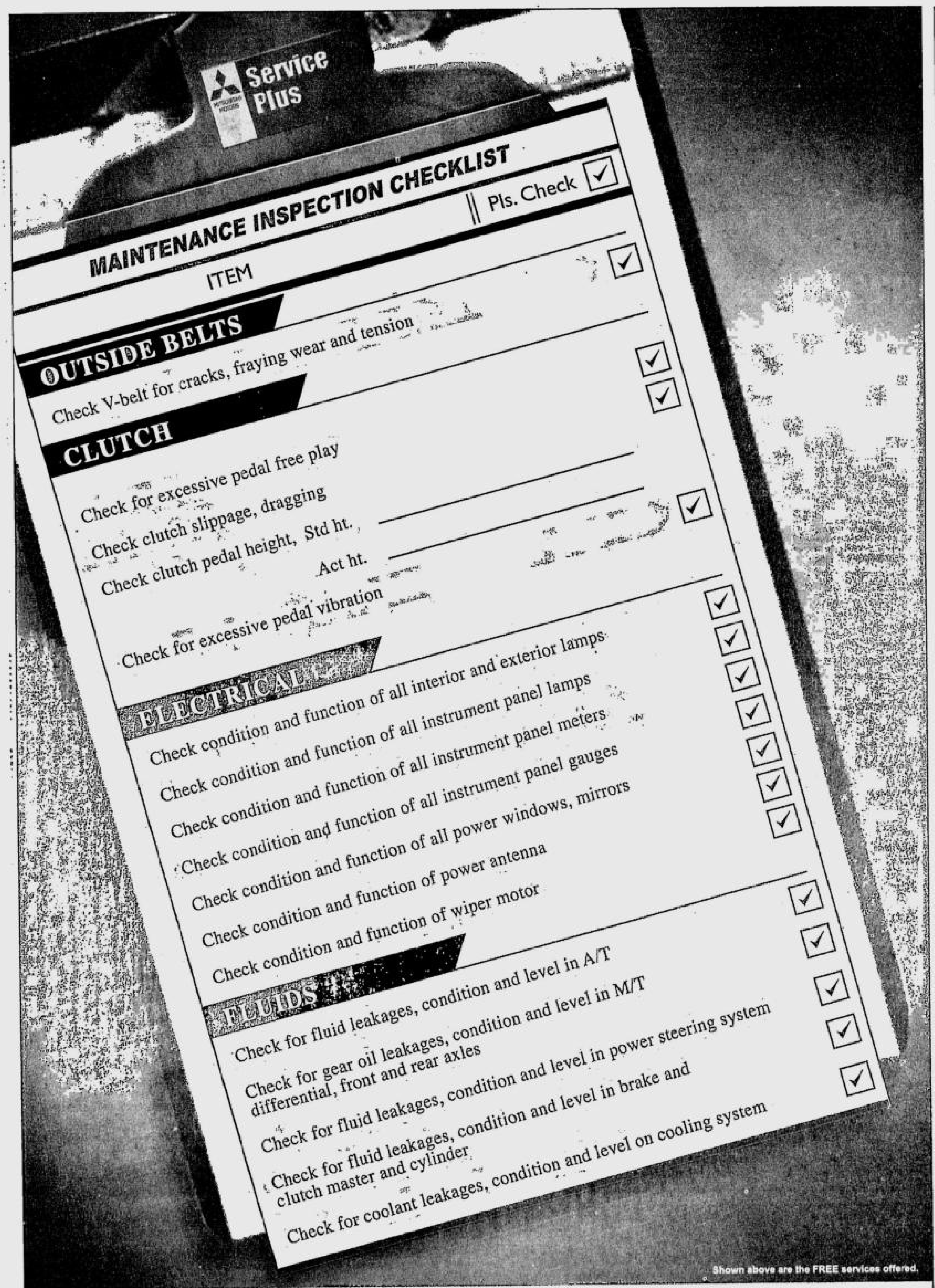

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Check clutch slippage, dragging
Check clutch pedal height, Std ht. ______ ☑
Act ht. ______
Check for excessive pedal vibration ☑
ELECTRICAL
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Check condition and function of all instrument panel lamps ☑
Check condition and function of all instrument panel meters ☑
Check condition and function of all instrument panel gauges ☑
Check condition and function of all power windows, mirrors ☑
Check condition and function of power antenna ☑
Check condition and function of wiper motor ☑
FLUIDS
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Check for gear oil leakages, condition and level in M/T differential, front and rear axles ☑
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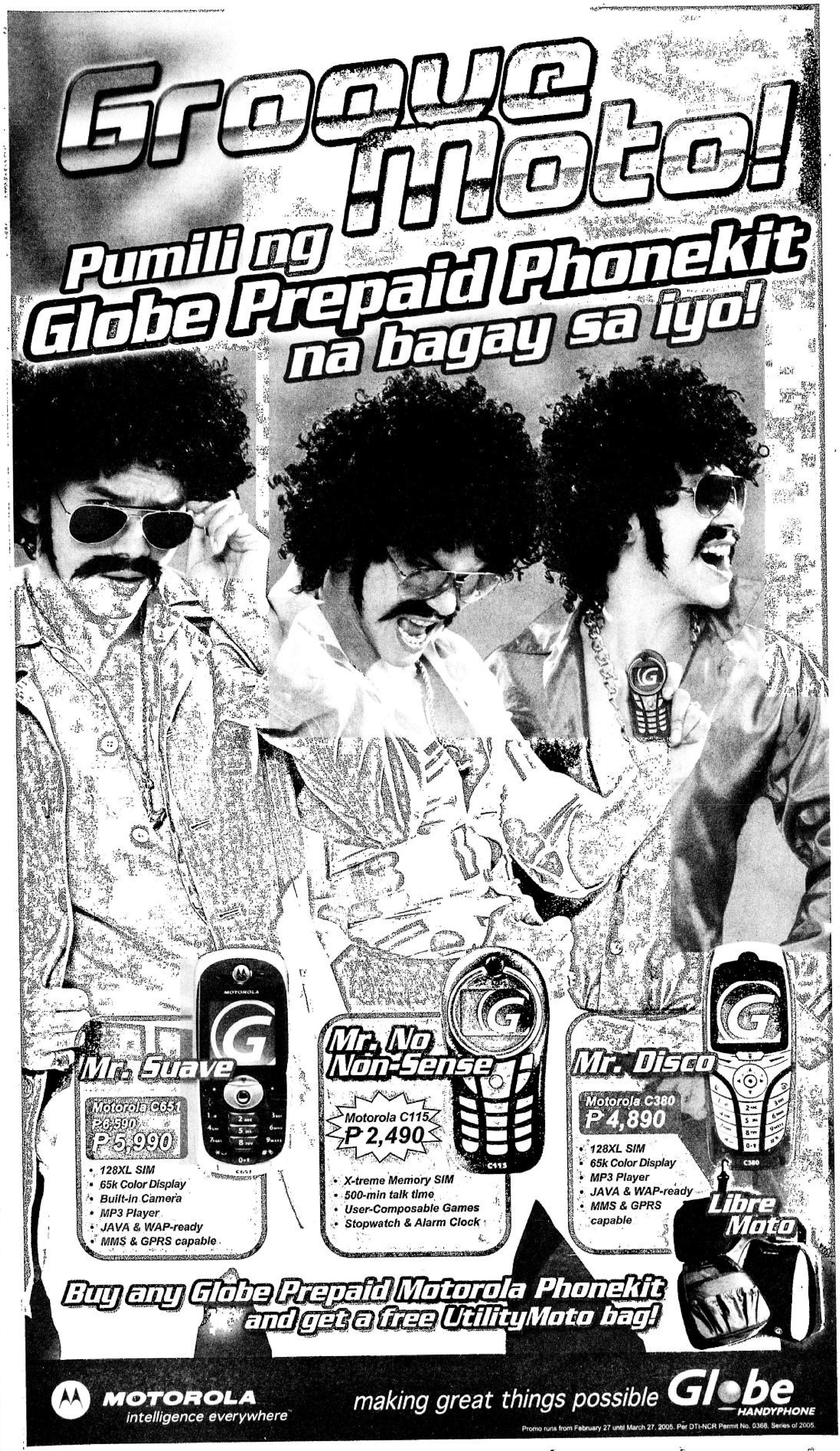

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DND says ₱593-M Minimi deal will 'not prosper'

From page A1

ment Procurement Reform Act that the contract should be denominated in Philippine peso.

The contract also failed to meet the National Economic and Development Authority's requirement that the price of the second Minimi contract should be equal to, or lower, than the contract price for the first delivery, Santos said.

"It would seem that since the second contract would now use a foreign currency, then the contract price under the second contract would be higher and therefore it is not in compliance with the conditions of RA 9184 and Neda," Santos said.

"The second contract would not prosper because of these questions," Santos said.

Comparison of prices

Santos said the DND had asked a technical working group of the AFP to make a presentation of the prices of similar weapons in the market and determine the "proper mode of purchase."

Military officials could not answer Biazon's question when he asked them to confirm reports that the Minimi basic weapon cost $2,401 while the accessories cost even more—$2,600—bringing the total per unit price to more than $5,000.

Biazon said the allegation of overpricing was a major issue that should be addressed.

Biazon exasperated

Maj. Gen. Reynaldo Rivera, deputy chief of staff for capability, materiel and technology development, or J9, said the price was a lump sum and did not specify how much was for the basic weapon and how much for the accessories.

In exasperation, Biazon said: "Did we buy not knowing what we bought and how much?"

"When the price was quoted, the accessories were already included in the quotation," Rivera said.

Rivera said the AFP only learned about the basic weapon price of $2,401 from the Internet.

Biazon also grilled defense and AFP officials on why the AFP overturned the recommendations of the commandants of the Philippine Army and Philippine Marines since 1992 in favor of the Ultimax, compared to the Minimi, a light machinegun used in some countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Ultimax preferred

Reading the letters of the Army and Marine commandants, Biazon said: "Very clearly, the commandants of the user units—the Army and the Marines—want the Ultimax. How come [you chose] the Minimi?"

Biazon said the Army and Marine commanders chose the Ultimax after conducting tests on it and the Minimi.

Why Minimi was chosen

Vice Adm. Ariston de los Reyes said the Minimi was chosen based on the circular of requirements (COR) submitted by the Philippine Army Modernization Board.

De los Reyes said the Minimi was chosen over Ultimax because the latter was only magazine-fed. He said the COR, which laid the specifications for the weapon, stated that the assault weapon should be both magazine- and link-fed.

Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, who approved the contract in June 2001 when he was defense secretary, said FNH won over two other bidders—Daewoo of Korea and the Ordnance Development Board of Singapore.

Sole supplier

Sen. Serge Osmeña pointed out that the AFP ended up being completely at the mercy of the FNH because FNH was the weapon's sole supplier.

"You decided on Minimi. There was only one supplier. How did you know you were getting the best price for the Minimi?" Osmeña asked.

₱946-M plunder case filed vs Pagcor chair, 5 others

From page A1

Waterfront Casino hotels for its two casinos in Cebu and Mactan in 1995 and 1997. The rate was P399.30 and P459.23 per sq meter, respectively.

She said the contract additionally provided for the payment to Waterfront of a 20-percent marketing incentive fee in excess of gross income of P560 million for Cebu and P300 million for Mactan. The payment was contingent on Waterfront's conducting an international marketing and promotions program to increase the revenues of the casinos.

The hotels are owned by William Gatchalian, a Chinese-Filipino businessman and alleged crony of ousted President Joseph Estrada, who bought the two properties from their Malaysian owners in 1998.

'Plastics King'

Gatchalian, dubbed the "Plastics King," also had ambitions of being the country's tourism king, acquiring a string of hotels in Cebu, Davao and Laoag in 1998 and 1999.

He denied he was a crony of Estrada or that he had obtained any favors from the deposed President to benefit his businesses. A Pinoy Times newspaper report in 2001 alleged that the Social Security System had bought P1 billion worth of Waterfront shares and had lent the corporation some P700 million.

Araullo said that Gatchalian tried to collect the 20-percent marketing incentive fee from Pagcor but had been consistently denied it because of the hotel management's failure to perform its contractual obligation.

She said Waterfront also demanded a uniform rent increase of P1,300 per sq meter for both casinos.

Araullo said that Gatchalian failed to get both of these concessions despite his known connection with Estrada.

But she noted that during the succeeding term of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the appointment of Genuino as Pagcor chief, Waterfront inexplicably got what it wanted—P946 million in advances, back rent and the 20-percent marketing incentive fee—over the objections of all middle-level Pagcor officers.

"We received reports that middle-level officers were forced by Pagcor's top management to issue a favorable recommendation for Waterfront," Araullo said.

"We also cannot understand why Pagcor brought the matter for arbitration and recommend an arbitrator known to be sympathetic to Waterfront before the government's gaming firm acceded to Waterfront's demands," she said.

King explained that the terms of the contract between the Waterfront hotels and Pagcor were based on the recommendation of an arbitration committee, which was created, and whose three members were chosen, by both parties.

"All these were arrived at by the arbitration committee and not by Genuino and the board," he said.

King said Genuino had renegotiated the Pagcor contract with Waterfront after finding that the terms of the old contract were disadvantageous to the government.

Renegotiated contract

The original deal was negotiated during the Estrada administration under then Pagcor chair Alice Reyes.

King said that the new Genuino team managed to remove the "exclusivity clause" (which requires Pagcor to deal only with Waterfront as a landlord); remove the 20-percent marketing incentive fee in excess of the two casinos' gross income; reduce the yearly escalation of the rental rate from 10 to 5 percent, and work out a scheme in which Pagcor could return idle space to Waterfront.

In exchange, the rent was raised to an average of P1,200 per sq meter for both casinos, from the P400 per sq meter in the original deal "to conform to the market rates in Cebu," he said.

King said he did not know how PlunderWatch came up with the P946-million figure.

But he could not provide the exact amount that Pagcor paid in advances and back rent to Waterfront, saying "I'll provide you all the figures on Monday."

Others accused

Genuino is being charged with violations of the Plunder Law, the Anti-Graft and Corruption Practices Act and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officers and Employees.

Also charged were Pagcor directors Daniel Gozo, Manuel Roxas, Luis Carlos and Philip Lo, and Rafael Francisco, the Pagcor chief of staff for operations.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, March 12, 2005
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading:	Jer 11:18-20
Gospel:	John 7:40-53

Many who had been listening to these words began to say, "This is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some wondered, "Would the Christ come from Galilee? Doesn't Scripture say that the Christ is a descendant of David and from Bethlehem, the city of David?" The crowd was divided over him. Some wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

The officers of the Temple went back to the chief priests who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him?" The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man." The Pharisees then said, "So you, too, have been led astray! Have any of the rulers or any of the Pharisees believed in him? Only these cursed people, who have no knowledge of the Law!"

Yet one of them, Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier, spoke out, "Does our law condemn people without first hearing them and knowing the facts?" They replied, "Do you, too, come from Galilee? Look it up and see for yourself that no prophet is to come from Galilee."

And they all went home.

Commentary

Everyone is divided over Jesus, thinking each knows how to interpret the scriptures and each looking for what they think is God's chosen one. They want to arrest him but even those who are sent to pick him up are impressed by his words—undecided but taken with the Word. Only those 'cursed people who have no knowledge of the law'—sinners and those who humbly know who they are before God can see the Truth of Jesus' words, works and person. Only Nicodemus speaks out and when he is contradicted, he returns to his silence. No prophet is to come from Galilee-fundamentalist interpretations that allows one to easily write off what is plain to see and experience. We are not allowed to use the Scriptures to avoid conversion, to seek to demean the truth or to act as we are called to-in the defense of life. They all go home. They ignore Jesus' words and intend not to be converted. We often go home too—after liturgy, after reading the scriptures and do exactly what we had intended to do. If we do not have our lives converted—then we have not heard the Word among us.

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Angara-led LDP holds nat'l confab

By TJ Burgonio

THE OPPOSITION Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino will hold its national congress today-its first since the fractious May 2004 presidential elections—and surprisingly, the widow of its standard-bearer, the late movie idol Fernando Poe Jr., isn't on the guest list.

Sen. Edgardo Angara said yesterday the party decided against inviting Susan Roces to the congress, where it will unveil its new policy directions, citing her reluctance to join politics despite a signature campaign to coax her to lead the opposition.

"I don't think she's interested in politics," Angara said at a press briefing. "Through friends and public announcement she said that she's not prepared to jump into the political [arena]. So we respect that."

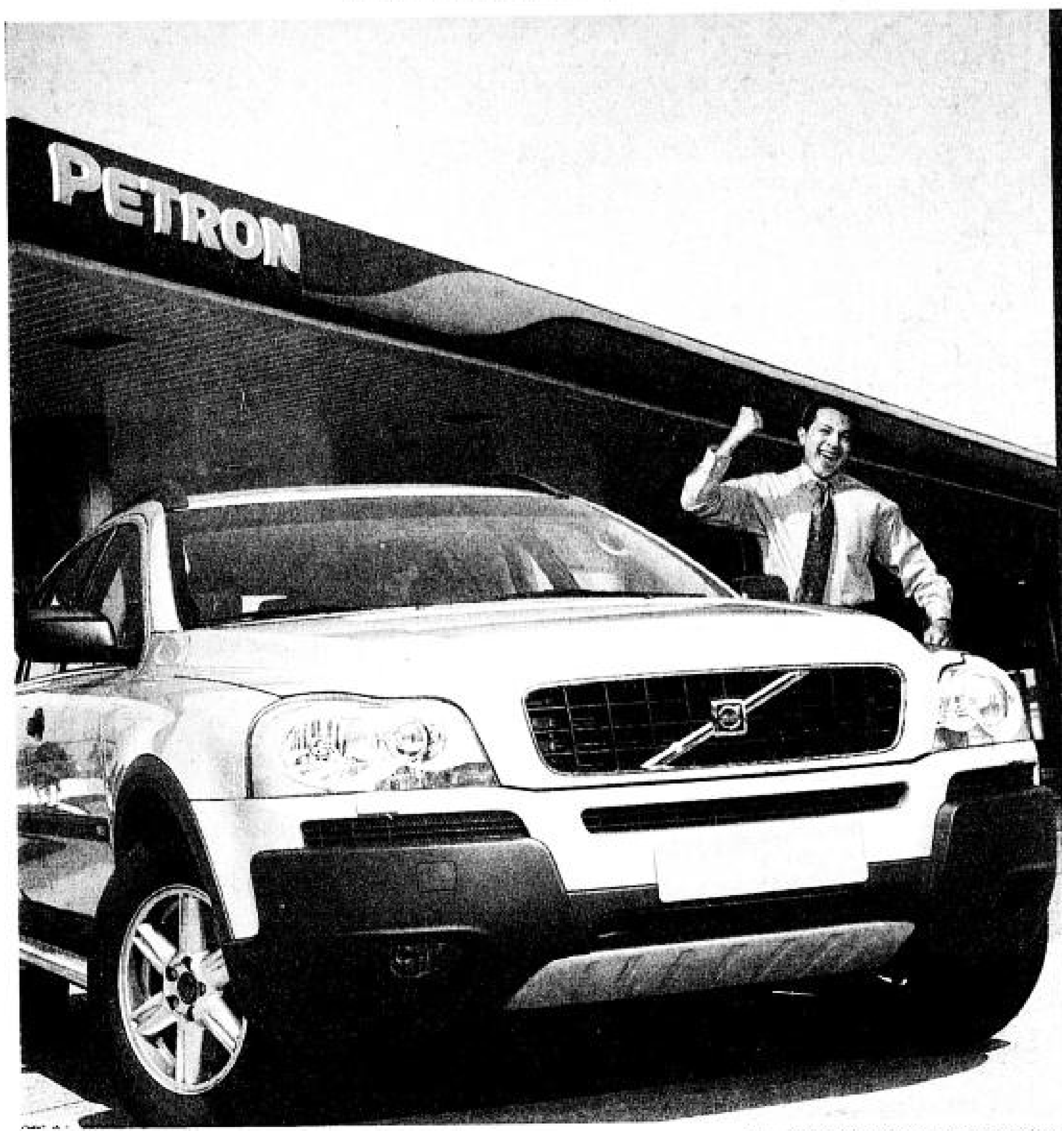
Followers of Poe launched in January a signature campaign to convince his widow to lead the opposition against the Arroyo administration, but Roces has so far ignored calls for her to go into politics.

The LDP was one of the three parties that formed the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) which fielded Poe as its standard-bearer in last year's bitterly contested elections, won by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Angara, LDP president, said that former Rep. Carlos Padilla and Representatives Agapito "Butz" Aquino and Rolex Suplico, who supported Sen. Panfilo Lacson's candidacy in the 2004 elections, were likewise not invited.

"They're no longer members of the party," he tersely said.

But Poe's runningmate, former Sen. Loren Legarda, was invited to the congress. Also expected to show up are former Sen. Teresita Aquino-Oreta and former Rep. Miguel Romero, among other 60 party members.



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One more kid dies; criminal probe launched

From page A1

A special investigating team, including doctors and toxicologists, met in Bohol and the National Bureau of Investigation has started looking into the case.

Lawyer Rene Mandawe, chief of the NBI in Central Visayas, said an autopsy would be conducted on any of the bodies yet to be buried if the family would agree to it.

He said a physician from the NBI central office was expected to arrive in Mabini to immediately conduct the autopsy.

Mandawe also said the bureau had spoken with some of the parents and was waiting to interview the surviving children.

"We will document this for possible prosecution," he said, stressing that the NBI could file charges of "possible negligence, reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide and physical injuries."

"But our investigation is not yet finished, so we cannot determine the appropriate crime," he added.

Stop speculating

In Manila, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said President Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered the Philippine National Police and the NBI to contribute their expertise to that of the health and agriculture officials currently looking into the case.

Bunye said Ms Arroyo had offered the presidential plane for use in bringing the samples to Manila. "This demonstrates the urgency in wanting to get to the bottom of this and get the answer [as soon as possible]," he said.

He said Malacañang wanted fast results because it did not want a repeat of the tragedy.

Bunye urged the public and the media to desist from speculating on the cause of the tragedy.

"We do not wish to speculate on what happened. We would like to get to the bottom of things, and we would like to do this in a scientific way," he said at a briefing in Malacañang.

He also sent a text message to this effect to Elma Teruel, chief of the regional office of the Philippine Information Agency in Cebu City. "Meanwhile," he added, "let us all work for food safety in all schools."

Teruel said Malacañang was worried about what was being reported.

"We are worried because the angling of the foreign media is that poverty had forced the people to eat cassava, and they died," she said.

What caused it

The acting governor of Bohol, Julius Caesar Herrera, also made a call for sobriety. He said it was "unfair and unkind" to blame people before the results of the investigation are released.

The suspected causes of the poisoning ranged from cyanide in the cassava to rat poison to insecticide either in the tuber itself or in the cooking oil used to fry it with.

But Susana Madarieta, regional health assistant director, said the sweets might have been infected by pesticide rather than cyanide, which can occur in cassava if it is not prepared correctly.

"Based on the signs and symptoms, it points to organophosphate poisoning," she said, adding that the sick children did not show signs of cyanide poisoning.

Madarieta said it was still unclear how pesticides could have infected the cassava. She suggested it might have happened during the preparation process or when farmers sprayed trees growing above the tubers.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit aired a similar opinion at a press conference in Manila.

He said some patients were frothing in the mouth and nose, symptoms which were "more consistent" with poisoning caused by organophosphate.

He also said diarrhea and pinpoint (or very small) pupils were among the symptoms that could send a victim into a coma.

"The other thing was, when the patients were admitted to hospitals, they were responding to atropine sulfate, which is the antidote for organophosphate [poisoning]," Dayrit told reporters.

Police custody

But he was quick to say that comments on what caused the mass poisoning would remain "speculative" until official results were available.

Victoria Hibaya, 59, one of two vendors who sold at least three preparations of cassava that poisoned the children, fears reprisal from the victims' families and has chosen to remain in police custody in Mabini.

The other, Anna Luyong, 68, remained off-limits to the media at the GCGMH. "It is part of the patient's rights," Po explained.

The doctor also told the INQUIRER that Luyong was suffering from a heart problem and an interview would "not be beneficial to her."

She said Luyong was initially confined at the gastro ward but was moved to the isolation ward of the intensive care unit because of her heart condition.

"The patient needs full rest, no stresses," Po said.

Chief Supt. Sancho Bernales, police director for Bohol, said he had ordered policemen deployed at the hospital to protect Luyong from angry relatives of the victims.

Two of Luyong's grandchildren were reportedly among the fatalities.

As of Thursday, 48 people, mostly children, were confined at the Garcia Memorial Hospital. Thirty-one were being treated at the Don Emilio del Valle Hospital and eight more at the L.G. Cutamora Community Hospital, both in Ubay town.

Twelve children were buried Thursday afternoon.

School canteens

Education Secretary Florencio Abad said in a radio interview that he would order restrictions on schoolchildren buying food from street vendors, saying they should use school canteens instead.

But he conceded that San Jose Elementary School did not have a canteen for its 267 students and that the two vendors had been selling food to the kids for years without incident. *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr and Christian V. Esguerra in Manila; AFP*

'She had seen . . .

From page A1

her mother gently strokes her hair.

"She appears to be all right, but is maybe thinking of her friends," her mother said, herself on the verge of crying. "She had seen her schoolmates die."

Alberto Rasonabe, Bohol's retired primary school administrator, said that trauma specialists and psychologists were unheard of in Bohol, and that the children would have to "rely for emotional support on their families."

In shock

More than 50 other survivors are scattered in clinics and hospitals across the island. There are no proper medical facilities in Mabini, a town situated on the northeastern coast some 100 kilometers from the capital city Tagbilaran.

Crowded in the same room with Inoc are a number of children her age. They are hooked up to intravenous bottles, sweating in the midday humidity and checked every hour by harried-looking hospital staff.

They cling to their parents, crying and asking why they became sick.

One boy, Joko Vallente, 7, sobs in his father's arms. He is naked from the waist down, having soiled his diapers as he struggled with diarrhea induced by the poison he had ingested.

Daily reminders

"They are in stable condition, but many of them are in shock. They are slowly recovering and we are looking after them," said Harold Gallego, administrator of the Garcia Memorial Hospital.

Rasonabe said schools on the island only had rudimentary facilities, unlike in many western countries where experts are readily available.

"This is the first time that there has been a large number of young students who died all at the same time," he said. "I imagine it could be really hard for [the survivors]."

An educator with 32 years' experience, Rasonabe said those who survived may have to battle daily reminders of their dead classmates, from the empty chair beside them to games they used to play during breaks.

"They will have a hard time adjusting. They will fear eating *balanghoy* (cassava) and most of all, may also fear going to school in the belief that their classmates' ghosts would haunt them," he said.

Guilt

Doctors at the hospital said it was common for survivors to feel guilty after such tragedies.

Bohol is covered by lush jungle and steeped in superstition, with tales about ghosts common in the folklore, Rasonabe said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who on Thursday offered her sympathy to the families of the children, has ordered that more funds be released to boost basic health care and that some of the surviving children be airlifted to better hospitals.

"Life will just go on for us here. This is a sad episode for the children, but they will have to live with it," Rasonabe said. *AFP*

Eating cassava a way of life for Mabini folk

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Eating root crops, including cassava, is a way of life for most of the residents of Mabini, Bohol.

Chief Insp. Joseph Moring grew up on breakfasts of boiled cassava.

This was why the mass food poisoning purportedly caused by cassava sweets came as a shock to many townsfolk, including Moring and others who have moved elsewhere.

Moring, now head of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in Mandaue City, said that because his family had meager resources, they had cassava for breakfast and reserved the complete meal of the day for lunch or dinner.

He recalled growing up in the 1960s in Barangay Cabidian, then considered an 8th-class municipality. Because of poverty, he said, the entire family migrated to Mati, Davao Oriental.

Their lives improved in Davao, but they continue to visit Mabini, he said.

Little has changed there, but it is now classified as a fourth-class municipality, according to Moring.

Mabini is an agricultural town producing rice and root crops. The rice it produces is often saved for the annual fiesta celebration, he said.

Mabini Mayor Stephen Rances confirmed that the townsfolk preferred eating root crops.

He said they had gotten used to eating *balanghoy* (cassava), *camote* (sweet yam) and *ube* (purple yam) to conserve the rice they produced, so they would have enough left until the next harvest.

Rice was last harvested in Mabini in November and December, Rances said.

'Nardong Putik' no hero to Cavite farmer group

From page A1

Samaca members said Revilla, a former movie actor (Jose Bautista in real life) famous for portraying underdog roles, should "stop referring to himself as Nardong Putik."

"Because in real life, [Revilla] has proven to be the exact opposite of the Nardong Putik we all knew, the local hero, the protector of the poor and oppressed Cavite folk," Garcia said.

Instead of "Agimat ng Masa (Amulet of the Masses)," Revilla should be called "*Salot ng Masa* (Plague of the Masses)" and "*Nagpapalayas ng Magsasaka* (Oppressor of Farmers)," according to the Samahan ng mga Magsasaka sa Silang, Kabite (Samaska), another militant farmers organization.

Revilla refused to be interviewed for this article.

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Revilla meets farmers

Revilla later called a series of meetings with Samaca members in which the farmers were asked to sign an agreement for them to leave the land they were tilling without preconditions.

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One more kid dies; criminal probe launched

From page A1

A special investigating team, including doctors and toxicologists, met in Bohol and the National Bureau of Investigation has started looking into the case.

Lawyer Rene Mandawe, chief of the NBI in Central Visayas, said an autopsy would be conducted on any of the bodies yet to be buried if the family would agree to it.

He said a physician from the NBI central office was expected to arrive in Mabini to immediately conduct the autopsy.

Mandawe also said the bureau had spoken with some of the parents and was waiting to interview the surviving children.

"We will document this for possible prosecution," he said, stressing that the NBI could file charges of "possible negligence, reckless imprudence resulting in multiple homicide and physical injuries."

"But our investigation is not yet finished, so we cannot determine the appropriate crime," he added.

Stop speculating

In Manila, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said President Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered the Philippine National Police and the NBI to contribute their expertise to that of the health and agriculture officials currently looking into the case.

Bunye said Ms Arroyo had offered the presidential plane for use in bringing the samples to Manila. "This demonstrates the urgency in wanting to get to the bottom of this and get the answer [as soon as possible]," he said.

He said Malacañang wanted fast results because it did not want a repeat of the tragedy.

Bunye urged the public and the media to desist from speculating on the cause of the tragedy.

"We do not wish to speculate on what happened. We would like to get to the bottom of things, and we would like to do this in a scientific way," he said at a briefing in Malacañang.

He also sent a text message to this effect to Elma Teruel, chief of the regional office of the Philippine Information Agency in Cebu City. "Meanwhile," he added, "let us all work for food safety in all schools."

Teruel said Malacañang was worried about what was being reported.

"We are worried because the angling of the foreign media is that poverty had forced the people to eat cassava, and they died," she said.

What caused it

The acting governor of Bohol, Julius Caesar Herrera, also made a call for sobriety. He said it was "unfair and unkind" to blame people before the results of the investigation are released.

The suspected causes of the poisoning ranged from cyanide in the cassava to rat poison to insecticide either in the tuber itself or in the cooking oil used to fry it with.

But Susana Madarieta, regional health assistant director, said the sweets might have been infected by pesticide rather than cyanide, which can occur in cassava if it is not prepared correctly.

"Based on the signs and symptoms, it points to organophosphate poisoning," she said, adding that the sick children did not show signs of cyanide poisoning.

Madarieta said it was still unclear how pesticides could have infected the cassava. She suggested it might have happened during the preparation process or when farmers sprayed trees growing above the tubers.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit aired a similar opinion at a press conference in Manila.

He said some patients were frothing in the mouth and nose, symptoms which were "more consistent" with poisoning caused by organophosphate.

He also said diarrhea and pinpoint (or very small) pupils were among the symptoms that could send a victim into a coma.

"The other thing was, when the patients were admitted to hospitals, they were responding to atropine sulfate, which is the antidote for organophosphate [poisoning]," Dayrit told reporters.

Police custody

But he was quick to say that comments on what caused the mass poisoning would remain "speculative" until official results were available.

Victoria Hibaya, 59, one of two vendors who sold at least three preparations of cassava that poisoned the children, fears reprisal from the victims' families and has chosen to remain in police custody in Mabini.

The other, Anna Luyong, 68, remained off-limits to the media at the GCGMH. "It is part of the patient's rights," Po explained.

The doctor also told the INQUIRER that Luyong was suffering from a heart problem and an interview would "not be beneficial to her."

She said Luyong was initially confined at the gastro ward but was moved to the isolation ward of the intensive care unit because of her heart condition.

"The patient needs full rest, no stresses," Po said.

Chief Supt. Sancho Bernales, police director for Bohol, said he had ordered policemen deployed at the hospital to protect Luyong from angry relatives of the victims.

Two of Luyong's grandchildren were reportedly among the fatalities.

As of Thursday, 48 people, mostly children, were confined at the Garcia Memorial Hospital. Thirty-one were being treated at the Don Emilio del Valle Hospital and eight more at the L.G. Cutamora Community Hospital, both in Ubay town.

Twelve children were buried Thursday afternoon.

School canteens

Education Secretary Florencio Abad said in a radio interview that he would order restrictions on schoolchildren buying food from street vendors, saying they should use school canteens instead.

But he conceded that San Jose Elementary School did not have a canteen for its 267 students and that the two vendors had been selling food to the kids for years without incident. *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr and Christian V. Esguerra in Manila; AFP*

'She had seen . . .

From page A1

her mother gently strokes her hair.

"She appears to be all right, but is maybe thinking of her friends," her mother said, herself on the verge of crying. "She had seen her schoolmates die."

Alberto Rasonabe, Bohol's retired primary school administrator, said that trauma specialists and psychologists were unheard of in Bohol, and that the children would have to "rely for emotional support on their families."

In shock

More than 50 other survivors are scattered in clinics and hospitals across the island. There are no proper medical facilities in Mabini, a town situated on the northeastern coast some 100 kilometers from the capital city Tagbilaran.

Crowded in the same room with Inoc are a number of children her age. They are hooked up to intravenous bottles, sweating in the midday humidity and checked every hour by harried-looking hospital staff.

They cling to their parents, crying and asking why they became sick.

One boy, Joko Vallente, 7, sobs in his father's arms. He is naked from the waist down, having soiled his diapers as he struggled with diarrhea induced by the poison he had ingested.

Daily reminders

"They are in stable condition, but many of them are in shock. They are slowly recovering and we are looking after them," said Harold Gallego, administrator of the Garcia Memorial Hospital.

Rasonabe said schools on the island only had rudimentary facilities, unlike in many western countries where experts are readily available.

"This is the first time that there has been a large number of young students who died all at the same time," he said. "I imagine it could be really hard for [the survivors]."

An educator with 32 years' experience, Rasonabe said those who survived may have to battle daily reminders of their dead classmates, from the empty chair beside them to games they used to play during breaks.

"They will have a hard time adjusting. They will fear eating *balanghoy* (cassava) and most of all, may also fear going to school in the belief that their classmates' ghosts would haunt them," he said.

Guilt

Doctors at the hospital said it was common for survivors to feel guilty after such tragedies.

Bohol is covered by lush jungle and steeped in superstition, with tales about ghosts common in the folklore, Rasonabe said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, who on Thursday offered her sympathy to the families of the children, has ordered that more funds be released to boost basic health care and that some of the surviving children be airlifted to better hospitals.

"Life will just go on for us here. This is a sad episode for the children, but they will have to live with it," Rasonabe said. *AFP*

Eating cassava a way of life for Mabini folk

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Eating root crops, including cassava, is a way of life for most of the residents of Mabini, Bohol.

Chief Insp. Joseph Moring grew up on breakfasts of boiled cassava.

This was why the mass food poisoning purportedly caused by cassava sweets came as a shock to many townsfolk, including Moring and others who have moved elsewhere.

Moring, now head of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology in Mandaue City, said that because his family had meager resources, they had cassava for breakfast and reserved the complete meal of the day for lunch or dinner.

He recalled growing up in the 1960s in Barangay Cabidian, then considered an 8th-class municipality. Because of poverty, he said, the entire family migrated to Mati, Davao Oriental.

Their lives improved in Davao, but they continue to visit Mabini, he said.

Little has changed there, but it is now classified as a fourth-class municipality, according to Moring.

Mabini is an agricultural town producing rice and root crops. The rice it produces is often saved for the annual fiesta celebration, he said.

Mabini Mayor Stephen Rances confirmed that the townsfolk preferred eating root crops.

He said they had gotten used to eating *balanghoy* (cassava), *camote* (sweet yam) and *ube* (purple yam) to conserve the rice they produced, so they would have enough left until the next harvest.

Rice was last harvested in Mabini in November and December, Rances said.

'Nardong Putik' no hero to Cavite farmer group

From page A1

Samaca members said Revilla, a former movie actor (Jose Bautista in real life) famous for portraying underdog roles, should "stop referring to himself as Nardong Putik."

"Because in real life, [Revilla] has proven to be the exact opposite of the Nardong Putik we all knew, the local hero, the protector of the poor and oppressed Cavite folk," Garcia said.

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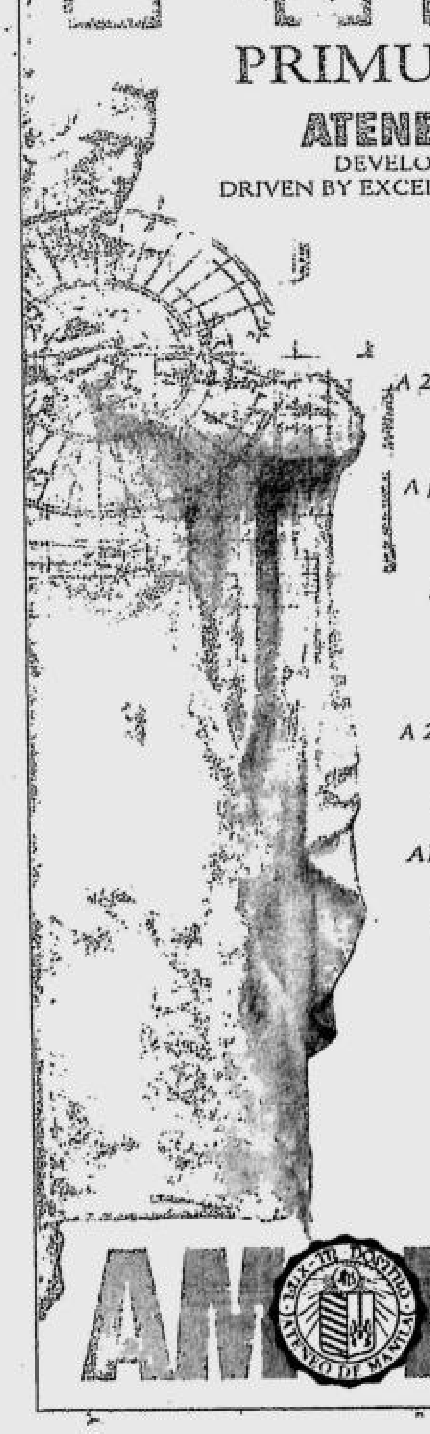

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AMONG EQUALS

MILF must crack down on terrorists, says US expert

THE MAIN Muslim guerrilla group in the South must hand over terrorists allegedly operating in its territory, or risk being listed as a terror organization by foreign governments, a terrorism expert said yesterday.

Police and military intelligence say members of the Southeast Asian terror group Jemaah Islamiyah and the Philippine Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf are in areas controlled by the Philippines' main rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Zachary Abuza, who is a senior fellow of the US Institute of Peace, told the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines that about seven "hardcore first-generation leaders" of Jemaah Islamiyah who have trained with al-Qaida were in Mindanao.

"This is very troubling to me," he said. "I don't believe that they could be there without MILF support."

Although the MILF has denied any links with either Jemaah Islamiyah or the Abu Sayyaf, Abuza said the group needs to take action against the terrorists to stay in the good graces of Manila and other governments.

The group is currently in peace talks with the Philippine government to end its decades-long separatist insurgency.

"Arrest them and turn them over," Abuza said. "They (MILF) are in total control of their territory. It's a matter of will."

The MILF's reluctance to pursue terrorists on its territory "is getting completely untenable because at some point, governments are going to lose patience and they (MILF) can potentially be put on the foreign terrorist organization list."

However, President Macapagal-Arroyo on Thursday dismissed reports of alleged links between the MILF and Jemaah Islamiyah.

"Maybe some elements (of the MILF) ... but not the MILF that we are in peace talks with," Ms Arroyo said.

"America will be the last one to put the MILF in the list of terrorists because it is supporting our peace process," she added.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, a former defense secretary, has said the MILF has pledged not to provide sanctuary to members of Jemaah Islamiyah.

Meanwhile, MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu said the rebels and the government were planning to take steps to jointly "interdict and isolate criminal elements," adding Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayyaf could be targeted.

Kabalu also said his group didn't believe Washington would list it as a terror group, citing a letter that US President George W. Bush allegedly sent to the late MILF chieftain Hashim Salamat, acknowledging that it had legitimate grievances that must be addressed in peace talks. *AP*

5 soldiers killed in new Sulu clashes

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—At least five soldiers were killed and five others were wounded in fresh clashes between government troops and Muslim rebels in Sulu on Thursday, an Army official said yesterday.

Brig. Gen. Agustin Dema-ala said the soldiers were killed after pursuing a band of about 80 Abu Sayyaf rebels and encountering heavy resistance in the mountains near Patikul town after killing five rebels in a gun battle on Wednesday.

"We will continue with our clearing operations," Dema-ala told reporters. "They are playing hide-and-seek with us."

He said five soldiers were also wounded when rebels attacked a British-made "Simba" armored carrier with rocket-propelled grenades.

The military said the five Army soldiers were wounded during an ambush staged by Abu Sayyaf gunmen and followers of former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) chief Nur Misuari in Barangay Lanao Dacula, Parang, Sulu, on Thursday morning but died while being treated at a military hospital in Jolo.

The military claimed to have killed five bandits and captured five other Abu Sayyaf gunmen during separate clashes in the said village.

Military spokesperson Maj. Bartolome Vicente Bacarro told the INQUIRER that early morning on Thursday, about 80 to 90 Abu Sayyaf bandits and Misuari followers harassed soldiers manning a makeshift military base.

A few hours later, another band of Abu Sayyaf gunmen, backed by Misuari loyalists, ambushed a military convoy bringing fresh water supply to the troops.

Dema-ala, commander of the joint Task Force Comet, said the Abu Sayyaf and the Misuari loyalists, led by Ustadz Habier Malik, have become active anew since Tuesday.

The military declared victory about two weeks ago after capturing a jungle Muslim rebel camp but sporadic clashes have continued, hampering attempts to persuade thousands of displaced villagers to return home.

Dema-ala said members of the two armed groups have joined forces and tried to retake the camp from the military on Tuesday, triggering a heavy firefight that wounded two soldiers.

He said military operations are now confined in Parang and Patikul towns which are already deserted.

"We assure that no civilian casualty here," Dema-ala said.

Meanwhile, Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Alberto Braganza said the military seized an arms cache which could have been intended for Misuari loyalists.

He said the shipment, consisting of five Armalite rifles, 79 magazines , and assorted Armalite spare parts, were shipped through Pambato forwarders from Manila.

Braganza said prior to the seizure, two MNLF integrees, identified as Julhan Hadjirul and Muks Istiba, tried to retrieve the cargo.

Nearly 5,000 soldiers have been fighting about 800 Muslim rebels in Sulu since Feb. 7 when the rebels ambushed an Army convoy and killed 13 soldiers.

By the Army's count, nearly 40 soldiers and up to 100 rebels have been killed in the fighting.

At the height of the offensive, close to 80,000 villagers from 10 towns poured into Jolo to escape the clashes.

Government relief agencies said about 40 percent of the evacuees had now returned to their homes in areas where the fighting had subsided. *With a report from Dona Pazzibugan, Reuters*

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY & TO BID

(Reinsurance for NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY'S Directors & Officers Liability Cover)

The GSIS-GIBAC, thru its Technical Working Group (TWG) is inviting qualified local and foreign reinsurance companies / brokers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the reinsurance for the National Development Company's Directors and Officers Liability cover for the period 12:00 noon of April 9, 2005 to 12:00 noon of April 8, 2006, with an approved budget of P7,200,000.00, all inclusive.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Issuance of Eligibility & Bidding Documents	Pre-Bid Conference	Submission & Opening of Eligibility & Bid Envelopes
March 14 to 18, 2005 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Secretariat OSVP-GIG, 5th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	March 21, 2005 2:00 PM Makati Skyline Restaurant 8th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City	April 4, 2005 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM Makati Skyline Restaurant 8th Floor, GSIS Bldg., Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

For applicant- foreign reinsurers & applicant-brokers with foreign lead reinsurer, the foreign reinsurer must have a credit rating of at least "A" from a reputable rating agency as of December 2004, and certify that it will provide a lead line of at least 20% of the reinsured risk.

Eligibility & bid documents shall be issued to applicants upon filing of a Letter of Intent to Apply and payment of a non- refundable bidding fee of P5,000.00 to the Government Service Insurance System.

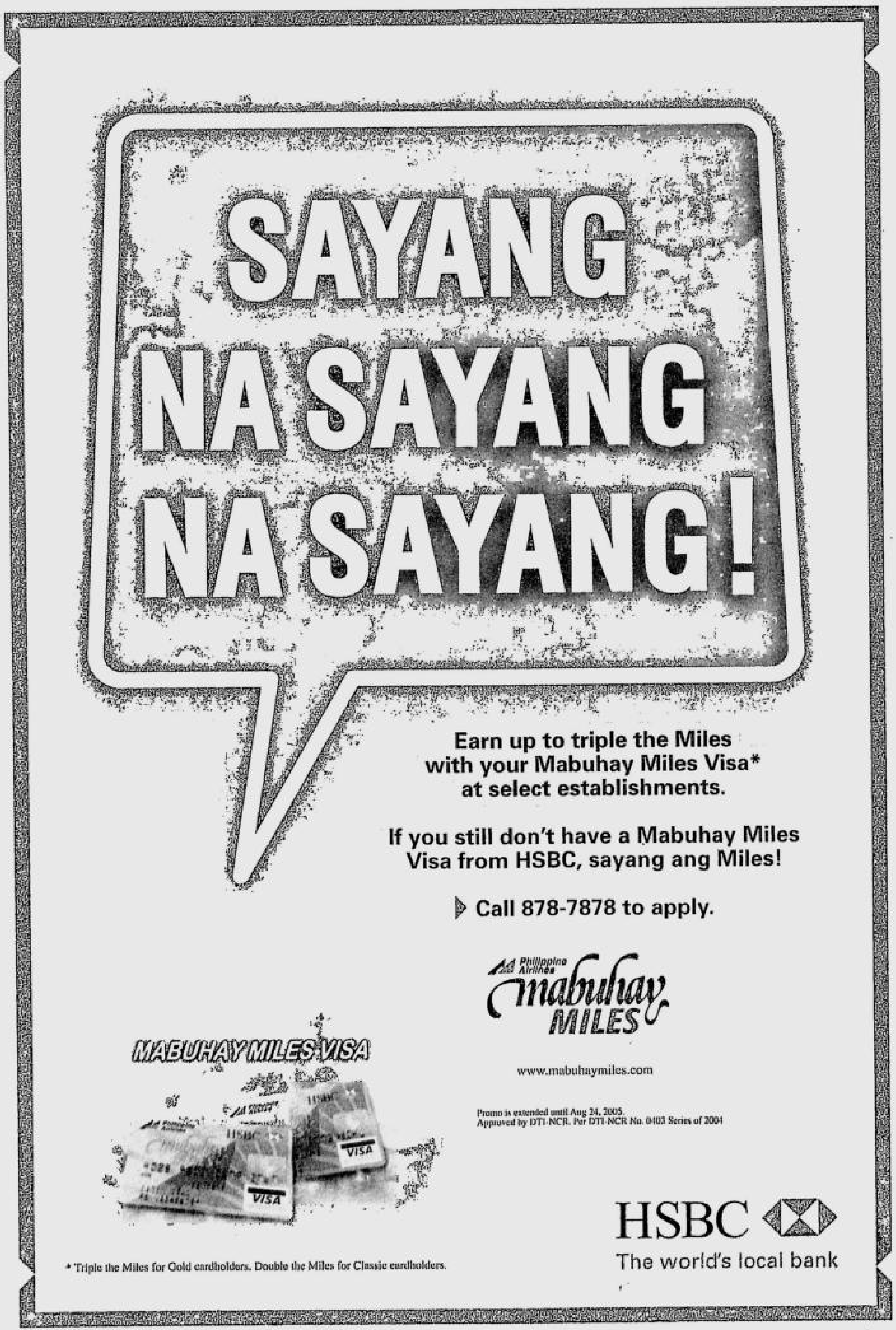
All particulars relative to Eligibility Screening, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bid, sufficiency of Bid Security, Post-Qualification, & Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of existing laws, rules and regulations.

The GIBAC & the TWG reserve the right to reject any and all bids or Letters of Intent, waive any defect therein & accept the offer which it deems responsive & most advantageous to the government.

March 9, 2005, Pasay City, Philippines.

GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM

ENRIQUETA P. DISUANCO
GIBAC Chairman
March 12, 18, 2005.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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

47 Iraqis die in new suicide bombing

MOSUL, Iraq—Forty-seven Iraqis were killed and more than 80 wounded in a suicide bombing at a Shiite funeral in Mosul, hospital officials said, as the front-runners in last month's elections raced to finalize a deal on a new governing coalition.

The bomber struck Thursday as mourners flocked into a hall next to the Sadreen mosque, where a service was being held for Hisham al-Araji, the Mosul representative for radical Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr.

"Many people were killed or wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the hall where the funeral service was being held," one witness said.

Dr. Ahmed Rajab at the Medical City hospital said it had received 18 dead and 41 wounded, while Dr. Jassem Abdul Karim at Salam Hospital said 29 bodies and 40 wounded were brought to his facility.

Local television asked people to give blood while the local Sunni Muslim leadership, fearful of reprisals, urged calm in Mosul, which is Iraq's third-largest city and one of its most ethnically and religiously diverse.

With the city on edge, religious leaders scrapped plans Friday for a public funeral procession when a mortar shell struck the site of the attack a few hours before the service was to begin.

Sunni Muslim Arabs make up about half of Mosul's 1.5 million population, while the rest are divided among Kurds, Turkmen, Shiites, Christians and other groups.

The city has been gripped by violence since November when the police force unraveled following insurgent attacks. And it saw very low Sunni turnout and numerous irregularities during the Jan. 30 elections.

It is a stronghold of Islamic militant fighters and former regime loyalists.

The government claimed Thursday that it has killed or captured 18 of the top lieutenants of al-Qaida's Iraq frontman, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, except for his man in Mosul, Abu Talha.

Zarqawi is Iraq's most wanted fugitive, with a $25-million bounty on his head. He has branded Shiites as "Jews and traitors" and vowed to target them.

The latest blow for Iraq's majority Shiites came as their political alliance, which swept the elections, was putting the final touches on a deal with the Kurds to form a coalition ahead of the new parliament's first session next Wednesday.

Both communities were poised for a taste of real power after being oppressed for decades under the ousted regime of Saddam Hussein, which favored members of his Sunni Muslim clan.

The two sides have drafted a three-page principle of understanding that will formalize their alliance, the Shiite side said.

"Both sides agree. Most likely it will be signed Sunday," said Adnan Ali, an aide to the front-runner for prime minister, Ibrahim Jaafari, a Shiite.

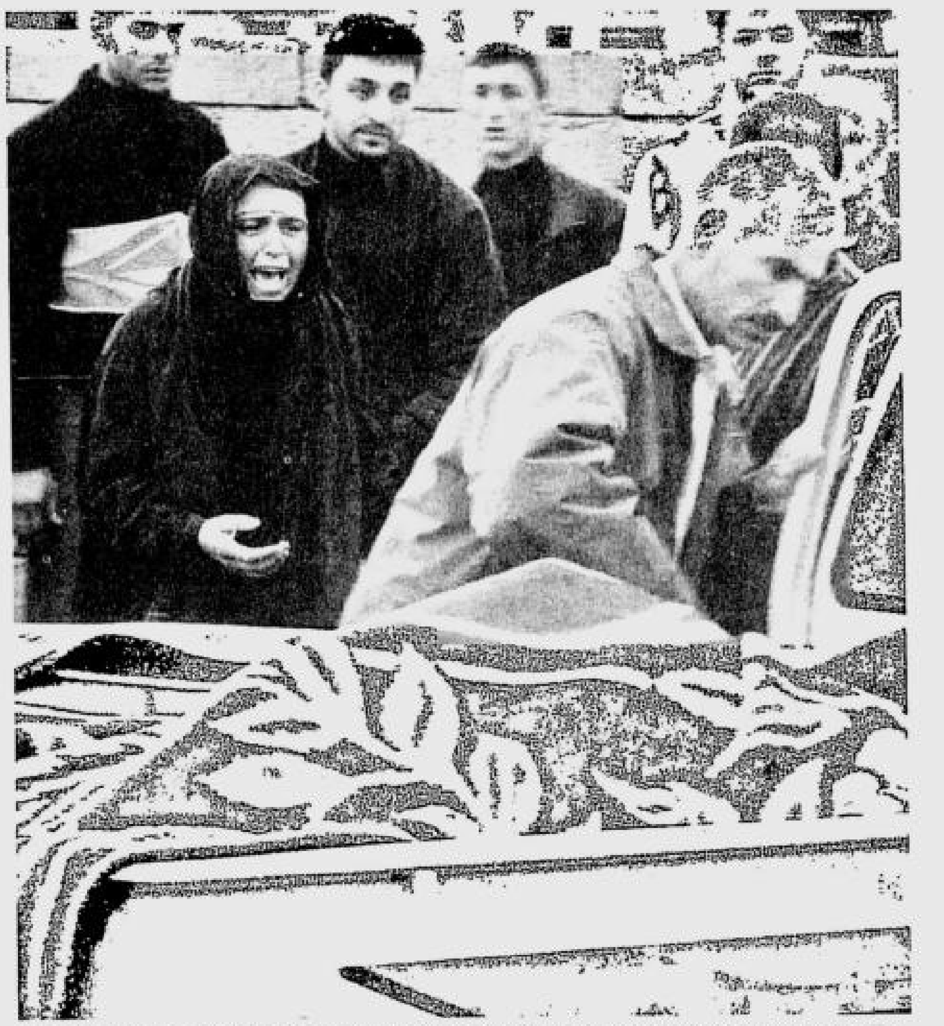
The document reaffirms Iraq's commitment to the transitional law (TAL), passed under the US occupation. .

With its commitment to a federal and secular Iraq, it will govern the country and serve as a building block for a permanent constitution that is to be written and put before a national referendum in October.

"We all agree that the TAL is the constitution for this government," Adnan said, adding it would govern the sensitive issue of the northern oil city of Kirkuk, which Kurds claim as their own.

He said the sides were in accord that Jaafari would be prime minister and Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani president.

Kurds had insisted on a written agreement, fearful that the Shiites, who had initially opposed the TAL's granting Kurds' greater autonomy, would try to roll back their hard-won freedoms. *AFP*



AN IRAQI woman grieves as the covered body of her husband is moved after he was killed in the suicide bombing, which targeted a Shiite funeral in the Iraqi northern city of Mosul, March 10. REUTERS

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Bill Clinton rests after successful surgery

NEW YORK—Former US President Bill Clinton is expected to make a full recovery after surgery on Thursday to remove scar tissue and fluids from his chest just months after a heart-bypass operation, his doctors said.

"I am very pleased to let you know that former President Clinton underwent successful surgery," New York-Presbyterian Hospital Chief Executive Herbert Pardes told a news briefing.

"Sen. (Hillary Rodham) Clinton and (his daughter) Chelsea arrived with him. He is awake, he is resting comfortably," Pardes said. "We expect Mr. Clinton to be walking tomorrow."

Doctors who operated on Clinton said the former president had a large pool of fluid compressing about one quarter of his left lung. During the four-hour surgery, a team of physicians removed the fluid with a probe then they opened his chest—a procedure they had not expected to need—to remove extensive scar tissue from his lung.

"My husband is doing very well following his surgery today," Sen. Clinton said in a statement. "Chelsea and I have been with him and he's in good spirits and looking forward to getting up and walking around, we hope as early as tomorrow."

Clinton in pensive mood March 9. REUTERS

The US senator from New York thanked hospital staff and said, "We're relieved and looking forward to having him come home in the coming days."

Thoracic surgeon Joshua Sonett described the scar tissue on Clinton's lung as akin to a "large thick rind" and said the procedure was "like peeling an orange."

"We're quite delighted by the end of the case, President Clinton's lung was very healthy, pink-appearing, and looks excellent, and we expect full functional recovery of that lung," Sonett told reporters.

Sonett said his team of doctors tried to remove the scar tissue with a probe but found so much that they had to open his chest cavity. He said the limited opening was in a different location from Clinton's heart surgery.

Of the scar tissue on Clinton's lung, he said: "There were sections that were closer to five to eight millimeters, in a thick almost rubbery plaque like hard, rubber peel. It was really quite remarkable."

Clinton played golf in Florida at a charity event on Wednesday before returning to New York, and bantered with doctors on the way into the operating theater on Thursday.

"As we were walking into the operating room he was in very good spirits, he was actually talking about his golf game," said hospital executive Robert Kelly. "He was a little upset that it was raining in Florida yesterday and he was anxious to get back to his golf game."

The former president is expected to remain in hospital for three to 10 days, doctors said, noting that the normal recovery time for the procedure is four to six weeks.

Clinton had entered New York-Presbyterian hospital before dawn for the surgery, a low-risk procedure doctors said is rarely necessary as a follow-up to the quadruple heart-bypass surgery he had last year. *Reuters*

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Ex-Kosovo PM faces 37 charges of war crimes

THE HAGUE—Former Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj faces 37 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, among them rape and murder, according to the indictment the UN war crimes court published Thursday.

UN prosecutors said Haradinaj, 35, was "one of the most senior Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) leaders in Kosovo" during the 1998-99 war between ethnic Albanian guerrillas and Serb security forces.

According to the indictment Haradinaj controlled the Dukagjin area in Western Kosovo close to the Albanian border and mounted "a systematic campaign" to drive out ethnic Serbs from the area.

As the KLA commander he "established a system whereby individuals were targeted for abduction, mistreatment and murder."

Haradinaj turned himself in to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on Wednesday after he resigned from his post as Kosovo prime minister the day before.

The UN prosecutor said that on some occasions Haradinaj "personally ordered, controlled and participated in the beatings of persons detained by his forces ... (and) participated in the abduction of persons who were later found murdered."

"On at least one occasion he gave his tacit approval as commander for detained persons to be executed," the indictment said.

Two of Haradinaj's former allies, Lahi Brahimaj and Idriz Balaj, who also turned themselves in Wednesday, are named in the same indictment. They both face 35 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including persecution, deportation, cruel treatment, murders and rape.

The three men were allegedly part of a joint criminal enterprise which aimed to establish "total control" of the Dukagjin zone through attacks on Serb civilians and "violent suppression of any real or perceived form of collaboration with the Serbs by Albanian or Roma civilians there."

Before setting off for The Hague Haradinaj denounced the indictment as a result of Serbian manipulation and said he was innocent.

All three men are in custody pending their initial appearance before the court when they will be asked at a later date to enter a formal plea to the charges. *AFP*

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Spain marks March 11 Madrid attacks with bells, tributes

VICTIMS sit on the tracks just outside Madrid's Atocha station as they are tended by rescue workers following one of a series of deadly explosion March 11, 2004. Ten simultaneous explosions killed 182 people on packed Madrid commuter trains in the bloodiest attack in Europe for more than 15 years. REUTERS

MADRID—Spain solemnly commemorated the first anniversary of the Madrid train bombings on Friday with church bells and silent tributes to the 191 people who died in al-Qaida's worst attack in Europe.

Some 650 churches throughout the Madrid area rang their bells for five minutes from 7:37 a.m., the time that 10 bombs packed in rucksacks began exploding on four packed trains bringing workers to the capital.

Just after dawn at Atocha station, scene of two of the bombings, Madrid Mayor Alberto Ruiz-Gallardon joined tearful mourners who stood still in silent respect.

Some people left candles and flowers at the station and one woman collapsed, trembling, and was taken away.

Esperanza Aguirre, head of the Madrid regional government, presided at a solemn wreath-laying ceremony in the city's main Puerta del Sol square as dozens of uniformed police officers marked five minutes silence. Flags were lowered halfway.

Sonia Delgado, a 31-year-old office worker who was at Atocha station a year ago, said the atmosphere was more subdued than normal. "I think people pulled together that day because we realized it could happen to anybody," she said, with tears in her eyes.

"We've gone through a very hard time. I wasn't personally affected ... but I put myself in the place of those who were.

"Who would have thought it? They were going home, or to work, and they found death," said 59-year-old Guillermina Estevez, who lives opposite Atocha station.

Trains packed with commuters continued to pull into the station, just as they had done on the fateful day a year ago.

Security was tight for the anniversary, with thousands of police officers on the streets of the capital and a Nato AWACS surveillance plane patrolling Spanish skies.

Relatives of the victims requested a low-key commemoration, wishing to avoid showy events that would bring back traumatic memories.

The then conservative government initially wrongly blamed Basque separatists ETA for the bombs, placed three days before a general election.

Islamic militants later claimed responsibility, saying the attack was in retaliation for Spain sending troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Widespread voter anger at the previous government's handling of the bombings was seen as a factor in Socialist leader Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's upset victory three days later. He promptly pulled Spanish troops out of Iraq.

The city will grind to a halt again for five minutes silence at midday when Moroccan King Mohammed will join Spain's King Juan Carlos and other world leaders for a wreath-laying ceremony at a "Wood for the Departed" where a tree has been planted for each of the victims of the March 11 bombings. *Reuters*

Pakistan's Khan gave Iran machines to make A-bombs

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan acknowledged on Thursday for the first time that a disgraced Pakistani scientist at the center of a nuclear black market gave Iran centrifuges which can be used to make atomic weapons.

Centrifuges purify uranium for use as fuel in atomic power plants or bombs. Washington believes Iran's centrifuge program, which it concealed from UN inspectors for nearly two decades, is at the heart of clandestine atom bomb plans.

Tehran says its enrichment program will produce only low-grade enriched fuel for power plants, not highly enriched uranium for weapons.

"(Abdul Qadeer Khan) has given centrifuges to Iran, but the government was in no way involved in this," Pakistani Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed told Reuters.

Pakistan has admitted in the past that Khan, dubbed the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, smuggled nuclear secrets to North Korea, Iran and Libya. But this is the first time Islamabad admitted that Khan supplied Iran with centrifuges.

The UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was not surprised by Pakistan's public confirmation of Khan's role in Iran's program. "We're well aware that Iran received designs and centrifuge components from the Khan network," IAEA spokesperson Melissa Fleming said.

The agency has found no clear proof of an Iranian nuclear arms program, but is not convinced Iran declared everything.

One Western diplomat in Vienna, where the IAEA is based, said Khan clearly knows the answer to the question of whether or not Iran wanted the bomb when it first made contact with Khan's clandestine nuclear network in 1987.

"Khan is the man who would know if the Iranians wanted nuclear weapons," the diplomat said on condition of anonymity, adding that it was a pity Islamabad refuses to allow the IAEA to question Khan directly.

Several Vienna diplomats said there is no way Islamabad was entirely unaware of Khan's atomic peddling.

In November 2004, the Iranian exile group that first outed Tehran's nuclear program, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, said that between 1994 and 1996 Khan gave Iran the same Chinese design for a nuclear warhead that he had given Libya.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei has called Khan's massive black market, with tentacles in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, a virtual "supermarket" for states seeking the bomb.

A.Q. Khan, revered in Pakistan as the man who secured for Pakistan the nuclear arms capability to balance that of nuclear armed neighbor and rival India, admitted last year to selling nuclear technology and made a televised apology to the nation. *Reuters*

Sept. 11 attacks boosted deaths on US roads

NEW YORK—Americans were so worried about air travel after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks that they crowded the nation's roadways, boosting the traffic fatality rate by nearly 1,200 deaths, researchers said on Thursday.

"These additional lives lost on the road represent a cost of terrorism that is more persistent, if less visible, than casualties of the 9/11 attacks themselves," said the authors of a new study—"The Impact of Sept. 11 on Road Fatalities: The Other Lives Lost to Terrorism."

Nearly 3,000 people were killed in the attacks.

In the last three months of 2001, 725 US driving fatalities were linked to travelers choosing cars over planes, the study found. A further 400 to 500 died as a result of the switch to cars during the first quarter of 2002.

The 1,200 deaths linked to the transport switch are in addition to the roughly 16,000 deaths that ordinarily occur every six months on US roads.

The researchers, from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, said in an interview that the impact has weakened over time, but it is difficult to say if it has faded entirely.

They used road fatality data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration from 1994 to 2003 to isolate the Sept. 11 effect from other causes of road fatalities.

Travelers switched to cars for two reasons, the study found. First, they were afraid of more hijackings. Second, stricter airport security procedures, such as requirements for passengers to arrive two hours before takeoff before domestic flights, made them choose cars. *Reuters*

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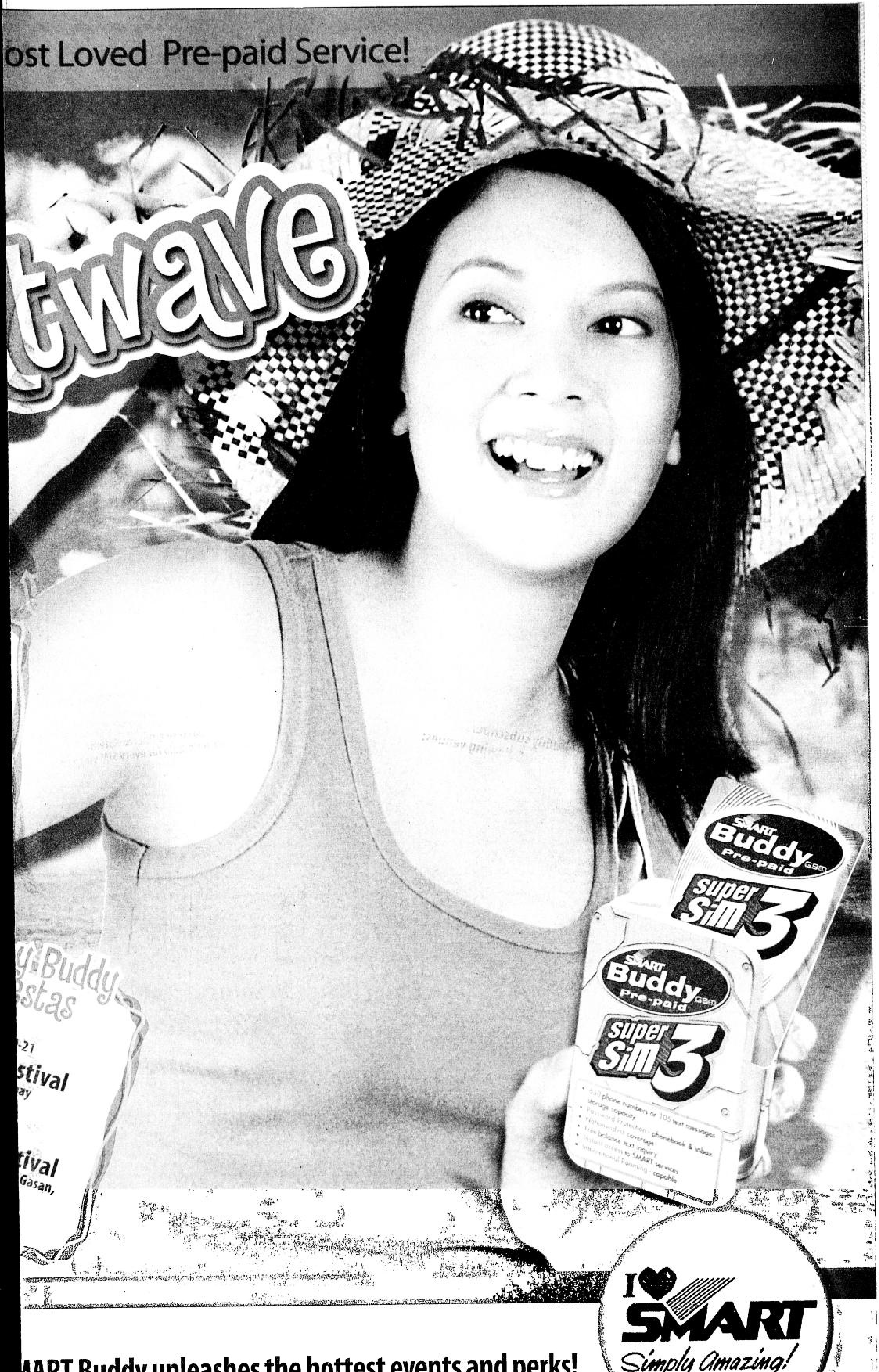
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Happy logging!

EDITORIAL

THREE months after the disastrous rains in Eastern Luzon that punished denuded forests and resulted in floods, landslides and loss of lives and property, the government is oh so casually lifting commercial log bans wholesale in different areas of the country. No, not in Eastern Luzon—in Nueva Ecija, Aurora and Quezon—but in other areas of the country, such as the Davao and Caraga regions in Mindanao. Plus the Cordilleras, most likely.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has betrayed the wisdom—or lack thereof—of the lifting when she surmised that the ban on the Cordilleras might be lifted because "we may need one area in Luzon and Cordillera looks like the most logical." She didn't even bother to explain whether the Cordilleras (Abra, Kalinga, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao and Mountain Province) could absorb the commercial operations despite the tenuousness of the environmental conditions there. The pure consideration here is commerce and market.

And most probably, politics, too. Some of those who welcomed the lifting of the logging ban in Caraga are lawmakers from Surigao and the rest of the region. The fact that they readily applauded the lifting of the ban indicates that they lobbied for the logging operations to resume.

Continued logging operations, of course, may benefit forest workers and their families who depend on the forests for their livelihood. They certainly are a consideration in any decision to lift the ban. But without doubt, the paramount consideration is the protection of the environment and the sustainability of the commercial operations in the midst of indications of a very fragile ecology. The small people themselves are part of that ecology, and it is deceptive that the logging ban is being lifted in their name when in fact it is their very lives and livelihood that are endangered.

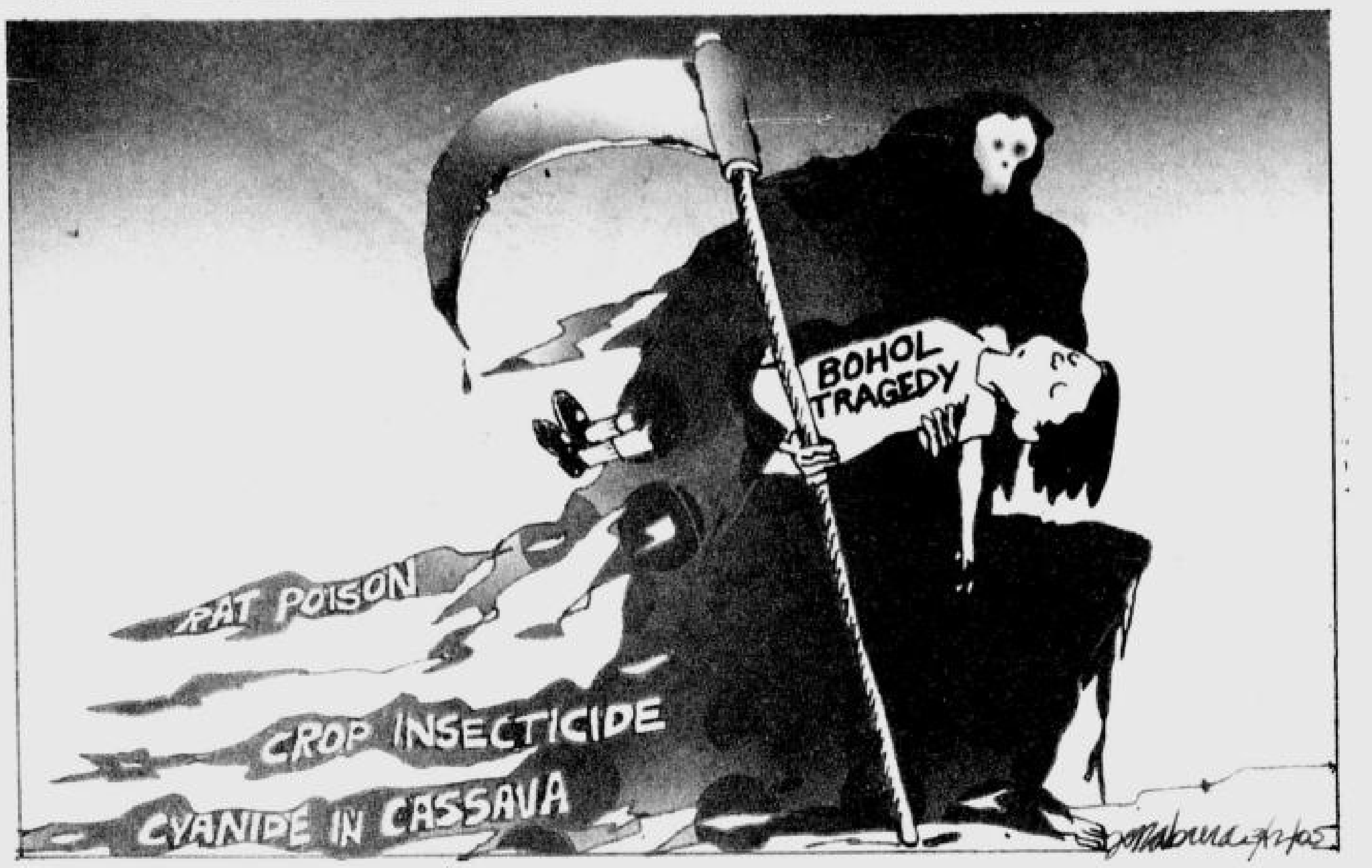
Which leads us to the manner in which the government seems to have gone about throwing all caution to the wind in lifting the logging ban in forested regions. There seems hardly a token effort on its part to assure the public and the stakeholders that the lifting is a deliberate move, one in which all aspects and interests have been considered with the view to preventing a repeat of last year's disasters.

If there's any effort at reassurance, it's merely photos of Environment Secretary Michael Defensor making the rounds of logging areas, inspecting the timber, checking the concessions, and generally looking serious and businesslike—in *barong Tagalog* yet. Defensor has not even conducted a modicum of inquiry into last year's flooding. He may have named names (some of them wrong, as when he accused Sen. Jamby Madrigal's family of logging greed), but he has not exactly put anyone behind bars. Nor has he started to prosecute anyone.

Perhaps most important, Defensor has not really reassured the public that his department is on top of the situation. While he has been quick to put on preventive suspension the provincial directors of Aurora, Quezon and Nueva Ecija (one of whom had long ago warned that untrammeled logging would lead to disaster), he has not exactly given us cause to be reassured that environment officials in Davao, Caraga and the Cordilleras have done their jobs religiously of monitoring the operations of loggers and seeing that they don't go beyond their concessions and that they reforest the areas they've exploited. Many communities in these regions have called for a stop to logging for fear of a disaster.

Three months after the calamity, Defensor has not provided any information as to what his department has done to stem another ecological debacle. Save for the officials he has suspended, he has not prosecuted any logger or provided any explanation on what went wrong last year. Questions are crying out to be answered but if he is forthcoming in anything, it is in lifting the logging ban elsewhere, as if saying that since disasters have taken place in Eastern Luzon, they may as well happen to the other regions so as to spread the disasters equably around.

The December landslides were unprecedented in the annals of a nation otherwise called the most disaster-prone in the world during the last century. At least a thousand people died and tens of thousands were rendered homeless and displaced. All of these stark statistics have been made insignificant by the casual manner in which the government is lifting the logging ban everywhere.



The power of legislative investigation

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

REP. Roilo Golez, chair of the committee on national defense of the House of Representatives, sent a letter to the editor recently defending the investigation by his committee of Gen. Jacinto Ligot for unexplained wealth.

I had written an earlier column that the probe was essentially for grandstanding rather than in aid of legislation, but he said it was in the discharge of their legislative power of information.

He invoked President Woodrow Wilson's view that the power of information was more important than the power of lawmaking. He also cited UP Law Dean Raul Pangalangan who disagreed with critics of legislative investigations in his column last October. Contrary to any insinuation, it was no refutation of my article which appeared in this column only last month.

The fact that Wilson made that statement does not make it Gospel truth. Everyone should know that the real function of Congress is to make laws, with the power of investigation as only incidental to it. Art. VI. Sec. 21 of the Constitution allows both House of Congress to conduct investigations but only "in aid of legislation."

The meaning of that provision is quite clear. Congress cannot conduct a legislative investigation for the purpose only of informing the public. In republican regimes, the duty to disseminate news on current events and public issues belongs to the privately-owned mass media, not the government.

Legislators should concentrate on their responsibility to enact the needed laws to improve the country and solve its problems instead of competing with the private information media.

Entrusting the principal power of information to Congress would threaten and impair the freedom of expression. Competition between legislators and private opinion-makers can only weaken the democratic ethos. The likely victor in this uneven contest would be the legislature with its powerful influence and the public funds subject to its appropriation and disposition.

It is easy to observe the evils of government control of the media in totalitarian countries. The authorities dictate what should be reported and what should be suppressed. The news purveyors of many dictatorial governments should warn us of what would happen if the principal task of Congress were to release, or withhold, information affecting the public welfare.

The punitive action taken against this paper during the Estrada administration should alert us to what could happen to our free publications if they should displease those in authority. The INQUIRER lost plenty of advertisements for its refusal to kowtow to that discredited leadership. Some papers profited from the "punishment" of this paper, but it survived and even prospered because of its integrity.

If that outrage we suffered could happen even in an apparently free society, how much worse would it be if Congress were to be vested with the principal power of information?

Congress has been unable to pass many important pieces of legislation in the exercise of its primary responsibility to pass laws. The VAT bill has not yet been approved as of this writing, and the national ID card will probably die a-borning. And all this because, according to Golez, the task of lawmaking must yield to the power of legislative investigation.

Many formal inquiries have been conducted in the past by Congress but we have not been informed if they resulted in the enactment of the needed legislation. Some years ago, the House of Representatives attracted a lot of attention when it inquired into the alleged payment of ransom to some military commanders in Mindanao for the release of certain hostages. There are vague reports about its findings and what statutes, if any, were passed because of the probe.

What was certain was the free publicity and *pasiklab* on TV enjoyed by the legislators. The information they received at much public expense did not, as far as I know, improve, correct, modify, supplement, or repeal our existing laws, many of which are dead letters in our statute books anyway.

The Golez committee investigation of General Ligot did not succeed in extracting useful information from the respondent who claimed the right against self-incrimination. Not only was the inquiry ineffectual but it was also unnecessary. The reason is that the Ombudsman and the Armed Forces were already conducting their own investigation in the exercise of their own respective powers. Golez and his committee did not have to get into the act unless their real purpose was to share in the public limelight.

I respectfully suggest that Golez address himself to the principal task of lawmaking instead of acting like a glorified prosecutor. If he really wants to be useful, he can strop the intrusive airplanes flying over Merville and oppressing us with their abusive but uncontrolled noise pollution. He has done nothing about it during his past three terms in Congress and up to the present despite the complaints of his constituents. He can do better about this problem than investigating Ligot.

Adding insult to injury

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

IT is becoming increasingly obvious that our Congress—or more accurately, some of its very influential members—are up to their old tricks again, a variant of ye olde hand-is-faster-than-eye shell game. They complicate what is simple; thereby confusing the public (including, arguably, well-meaning colleagues), like the con artists who convince their marks of the benefits of particular schemes, when the hapless victims are actually being robbed.

Witness the latest sin tax. Our legislators pretended concern for the poor (the poor should not be deprived of the simple joys of smoking or drinking by raising sin taxes). But keeping those taxes low actually hurt the poor: not discouraging smokers and drinkers increases the risks to their health and livelihood, as well as the risks to their families and the community through secondary smoke inhalation and alcohol-related violence; and the foregone revenues impair the ability of the government to pursue social and economic programs and to avoid financial collapse with the inevitable burden on the poor.

Not only does the new sin tax law harm the poor, it benefits special interests by retaining the "poison pill" provision which was inserted in the original law during previous bicameral committee negotiations. That poison pill freezes the base of the sin taxes at 1996 price levels, which costs the government at least P20 billion annually in foregone tax revenues, per estimates of the Department of Finance and the Bureau of Internal Revenue, based on actual cigarette sales. It may be unnecessary to point out, but I will, anyway, that the person who has gained the most from this provision is Lucio Tan, who is into both cigarette (No. 1 in the country) and beer (No. 2) production.

To heap insult on injury, these legislators then claimed that the new sin tax bill would result in tax revenue increases of about P17 billion, when more credible independent estimates put this closer to between P4 and P6 billion. And they had the gall to show outrage when the international credit rating agencies and multilateral financial institutions described the bill as "watered down," with the former downgrading the Philippines credit rating anyway.

The same thing is happening to the new VAT measures. The reader will recall that the UP 11 paper estimated that in order to avert a financial collapse and put the country on a sustainable development path, the government had to implement revenue-raising or cost-cutting measures (in an efficient, equitable, and timely manner) amounting to between 2.9 and 3.4 percent of GDP (1.9 percent to be added to the existing primary surplus, and 1-1.5 percent for future growth, vital social spending, and possible debt reduction). At current GDP levels, that would amount to between P139 billion and P163 billion.

Expanding the coverage of the VAT (i.e., eliminating the exemptions) and increasing its rate from 10 to 12 percent, in that order, was one of the measures recommended, as were halving the congressional pork barrel, reducing the IRA allotments to local governments, and correcting the infirmities in the original sin tax law (again, in that order).

So what happened to the VAT? The House of Representatives first raised the VAT rate to 12 percent, which of course raised a storm of (valid) criticisms that the increased tax burden would be borne by those unfortunate enough not to be included among the exemptions. The House labored some more, and passed HB 3705, which Speaker Jose de Venecia claimed will "maximize new revenues while providing the necessary safety nets to protect the Filipino masses, especially the poor from undue tax burden."

Unfortunately, the expected benefits from the "pro-poor" provisions—a multi-tiered VAT rate system (of 4, 6, 8 and 12 percent), no-pass-on provisions (prohibiting petroleum product sellers and power generating companies from passing the tax burden to consumers), and sparing the poor from the VAT on doctors' and lawyers' bills—may not come to pass at all, either because of legal constraints or the lack of administrative capability from an already strained bureaucracy. Additionally, these provisions open the gates to graft and corruption, as companies attempt, by hook or by crook, to be classified under lower tax categories, and officials use their discretionary powers to increase rent-seeking activities, with consequent loss of revenues. The road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions.

But while there are doubts about the benefits to the poor, there is no doubt about the additional benefits to the rich. Because the bill, which purports to remove exemptions, adds another exemption. It exempts from VAT the activities of international air transport operations (importation or lease of aircraft, importation of fuel, aircraft goods and supplies). Plus, it zero-rates services rendered to these aircraft, which means that even as the operator pays no VAT, he is entitled to a refund for any input VAT he pays! Another insult to another injury to the Filipino people.

The beneficiaries of new exemptions under HB 3705 include the wealthiest families in the country. But the most conspicuous would be—guess who?—the same person who benefits from the watered down sin taxes, Lucio Tan.

Does the Senate version correct matters? Alas, no congratulations to the Senate this time. The Senate version, if anything, gives special interests even more advantages.

(To be continued)

Cassava tragedy

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE TERRIBLE tragedy that hit the little town of Mabini in Bohol, 100 kms. from Tagbilaran, is something that could happen to anyone anywhere in this cassava-loving country. I myself love cassava cakes, and whenever I go marketing, I end up buying the *kakanin* for my household. In big gatherings, a favorite desert is a large pan of cassava cake because it's delicious and, compared to those European pastries, much cheaper. It was only when I read about the Bohol tragedy that I realized that poor preparation of cassava could be harmful and even fatal.

One theory being looked into by the authorities is that some amount of cyanide is present in the skin of some cassava varieties, which have to be prepared well to be edible. Perhaps the preparation wasn't done right in the case of the cakes eaten by the school children in Bohol. But this tragedy won't stop people from eating cassava, especially in the hinterlands where it is a staple. The important thing is to prevent the accident from recurring, mainly through education on how to prepare it safely. This should be done at the lowest level by health people, through barangay officials and town hall meetings, as well as through radio and TV.

* * *

The theater presentation "Anthology" was brought to Manila and Cebu this week by the Israeli Embassy to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps in Europe, where some six million Jews perished in the Holocaust. The seven-year-old play in the style of the avante-garde and experimental "Fringe Theater" took us into the sala of Holocaust survivor Zelda Greenwald. In between brandy sips, Zelda regaled the audience of over 100 people with her wit, charm, humor as well as her deep angst and pathos. She soliloquized and sang songs from that tragic era and about the painful saga of the Israeli people, accompanying herself on the grand piano. The recurring theme was "Return to the land of your soul, return again, return again to the land of your soul. Return to your soul, return to what you are..."

The second portion was the "wild and tempestuous ride" that the write-up promised, as Zelda and her neurotic and dysfunctional son (played by Moni Josef) chased each other around the ballroom, ending up on top of the grand piano. There the overgrown boy hysterically went over the horrors of the concentration camp as told and retold by his mother in "beautiful bedtime stories." But it's only a take-off for recalling other horrors since then, in many conflict areas around the world such as Cambodia, Vietnam, Kosovo, Chechnya and even Southern Philippines. At this point "fringe" hits the nerve center.

* * *

I sat next to artist Smadar Yaaron, who played Zelda, at the dinner tendered by Israeli Ambassador Yehoshua Sagi for a select group, to meet the visiting theater people. Smadar, who has a degree in educational theater from Tel Aviv University, is involved in therapeutic workshops, healing studies and alternative theater. She is one of the founders and managers of the 20-year-old Acco Theater Group, and has traveled all over the world, portraying Zelda. Smadar is proud of the fact that Acco, an old historic city north of Haifa, and the theater group it gave rise to are both exponents of creative coexistence between Jews and Arabs (Acco has about 20,000 Arabs and 40,000 Jews). In fact, Firez Rubey, the "Anthology" technician, is an Arab and a Muslim.

Smadar also has a multi-faith group called "Prayer," where Jews, Christians and Muslims all interact in singing and dancing.

She noted that many observers regard the peaceful coexistence practiced in Acco as something of a "bubble," but she dreams and hopes for many such "bubbles" all over her country. "When you are with a person, you connect; people-to-people is okay," she says. "It's when one deals with political groups that the problem begins."

* * *

Despite her ready smile, Smadar's eyes mirror the anguish and pain that Israel has gone through over the decades. I queried her if her family suffered in the Holocaust. She narrated how her father, then a 12-year-old boy, managed to escape with his aunt from a train that was steaming toward one of the concentration camps with many families on board. The boy's father, mother, sister and other relatives were not so lucky, and they perished in the gas chambers. The boy and his aunt and six other people fled to a village in Czechoslovakia, where they dug a space beneath a pigpen and stayed all of eight months, without surfacing even once! They were saved from starvation by kind souls who would throw food into the hole at night. Smadar says her father never talked to her about that dark part of his life, and she only learned about it from their relatives.

* * *

When CEOs and businessmen get together to sing for a cause, it's something to watch out for, especially if you have singer-composer Jose Mari Chan in the cast and no less than veteran director Heidi Sison to orchestrate the show. The concert "CEO Sings...Timeless Music" features top CEOs, COOs and businessmen who will use their love for music and talents to raise funds for the Character Building Foundation Inc. CBFI is a non-profit, non-stock organization that advocates strong positive Filipino character as the foundation of a progressive nation through education, headed by "Direk Heidi." The concert, which includes the special participation of the renowned brother and sister team of soprano Lisa Cabahug and tenor Nolyn Cabahug, will see performers like Rene Henson of Palladin Security, Reps. Ed Zialcita and Monico Puentevella, lawyer Frank Chavez, Chito Ponce Enrile, Eric Cruz of F.F. Cruz, Sonny Liwanag, Marcelino Yumol Jr. and many others. It will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, March 16, 2005 at the Meralco Theater. For reservations, call Joyce Cruz at 890-5321 or 895-9712, or 0916-461-7106.

My clarinet

YOUNG BLOOD

Jael Wenceslao

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

I WENT to the Podium recently to hear the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra perform. It was a feast for the ears, especially if one's ears have grown accustomed to hearing the blaring of car horns, the incessant ringing of cellular phones, and the mindless chatter of television programs. And I suddenly missed my clarinet.

I used to play the clarinet in high school and college. I had a basic understanding of rhythm and note-reading, but I mainly played by ear. Now, my clarinet is stored in some dark place and forgotten, just like my alternate career.

I've always wondered what my life would have been if I had taken playing the clarinet seriously. Would I have been a part of the orchestra that I heard that night? Would I have been seated with my colleagues, creating wonderful music and being washed over by the warm reception? More importantly, would I have been happy being a musician, a "clarinetist"?

Unfortunately, more questions—ranging from the practical to the profound—emerge from such a daydreaming exercise. Would I have been able to sustain myself as a musician? Would it have paid the bills, and helped my loved ones financially? Would I have earned the respect of people, especially my family and friends? Would such a career have amounted to anything in the end?

Maybe. Or maybe not.

But then, shouldn't the feeling of satisfaction and the pursuit of your passions outweigh financial considerations or practical concerns? Nothing else should matter as long as one does what brings happiness and fulfillment, right?

I also miss writing. Though I miss playing clarinet, I miss writing more. I used to win creative writing medals in grade school and I even became the editor of our grade-school publication. I once won the nationwide environmental writing contest sponsored by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. I loved studying grammar and spelling.

One time in grade school, I got into trouble with my English teacher after she caught me reading a novel under my desk during her class. She never knew this, but I actually had been reading during her class every day for several weeks before I was caught! I was a voracious reader then, fine-tuning my writing by absorbing the works of respected authors.

As a child, I barely listened during English classes for the pace of the class was too slow for me. As a teenager, nothing felt better than putting together a composition that articulated what was inside of me. Transforming something intangible into something tangible through words gave me a natural high.

It's obvious that I was (and maybe still am) a creative student.

But then, my idealism was bound to crash with reality. If one were to make it rich in today's capitalist world, writing was not the best career to pursue. My parents, who were both editors in their respective college publications, believed in this. Their current occupations are not in any way related to writing and journalism. One is a businessman, while the other is a professor.

Can writing become a viable career?

I haven't seriously pursued a career in music or writing. I don't read as much or write as often as I used to. My college degree is in business management, a discipline that is as logical as writing is creative. I studied accounting, sales, marketing and operations. Whereas once I used to read fiction and fantasy novels, now I read Forbes and Business Week.

Yet, the more I try to make a career in business, the more I long to write.

It is sad that today's world, and especially our country, puts a premium on white-collar, high-paying careers. What is recognized and respected is the corporate life, a life that, thankfully, creates jobs, but is constantly motivated by monetary gain. Almost everyone who graduates from college aims to get a cubicle-bounded and desk-mounted career. They all want to climb the proverbial "corporate ladder" and earn the highest job titles. Everyone wants to be a CEO, a president, or a managing director.

Doesn't anyone wish to be a teacher, a thespian, a photographer, a painter, or a musician? There is more to life than being a businessman or an entrepreneur. Whenever I read an insightful article or hear a well-rehearsed symphony, my mind travels to another plane and I imagine what my life would be if I were a writer or a musician.

Once in a while, I think of my alternate life, of a life not riddled with reports, market research, costing, and so on.

When I saw my article on shoes published in the INQUIRER, I was ecstatic. When my other article on ants was published a few months later and received favorable reactions from friends, my mind began conjuring possibilities of life as a writer, of living in a cabin way up in the mountains with my trusty pen and paper—or an iMac Powerbook and a DSL connection—and becoming a bearded recluse, a hermit.

Well, maybe not a hermit. But, maybe I can become a writer.

I don't really know if I'll finally become a writer someday. I want to. That is where my passion lies.

For now though, it's a good thing there's Youngblood to get me started. Or at least quench my desire. Now if only I could afford a Powerbook.

Jael Wenceslao, 24, is a BS Business Management graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

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'Upskirting' is latest form of violence vs women

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

NEW YORK—It's called "upskirting." And it's the latest form of sexual exploitation, voyeurism, commercialization and even violence being directed against women these days.

As a segment on the "Today" show explains, "upskirting" is carried out by sickos who carry portable video cameras in bags, then stand very close to unknowing women wearing skirts, filming the "view" the camera captures. Filming women's thighs and underwear is bad enough, but the voyeurs have found another sickening use for information technology, broadcasting their footage on the Internet (there are apparently "upskirting" sites) and even through cell phones.

Really, these days, thanks to new technology, there are seemingly no limits to the imagination and creativity of the world's perverts and sexual predators.

Which is why discussions in the ongoing review of the Beijing Platform for Action, formulated a decade ago, often seems to be nothing more than rearguard action. Even as delegations debate new resolutions on violence against women and the trafficking for sexual purposes of women and girls, new forms of violence and exploitation, such as "upskirting," are being developed and popularized.

And yet, governments around the world are only now recognizing trafficking as a form of violence and exploitation. Only lately have governments of both "sending" countries (such as the Philippines) and "receiving" countries seen fit to coordinate their efforts to quell the global trade in women and girls, to enact laws that punish not only the women who cross borders and perhaps break immigration laws, but more appropriately the men who profit from the trade.

* * *

ONE of the more controversial resolutions in this "Beijing + 10" Review is that authored by the United States entitled, "Reducing the demand for trafficked women and girls." The resolution seeks to curb trafficking by focusing on what's known as the "demand side"—targeting sex tourism and prostitution.

Other delegations, especially the European Union and NGOs advocating for women's human rights, have raised objections to this resolution, saying it "links trafficking to prostitution, which is the wrong way to approach the problem."

The Women, Environment and Development Organization (Wedo) declared that "we do not want women to be punished and the reason why they engage in such activities has to do with poverty issues and empowerment, and countries should first look into these factors."

For its part, the Philippines, which has taken the lead in advocating on the issue of trafficking in the UN, has just managed to have a comprehensive resolution on global cooperation on trafficking in the General Assembly. The task facing the delegation, therefore, is how to wed this comprehensive resolution with the new one being introduced by the US.

* * *

AMBASSADOR to the United Nations Lauro Baja hosted members of the Philippine delegation for dinner at his residence Monday. Part of the appeal was certainly the fact that the residence is in a townhouse that was bought by Imelda Marcos, made notorious by video clips of the raucous parties held at the in-house disco.

Though showing signs of age, the residence is still quite an impressive place, retaining signs of Imeldific opulence. But the Bajas have also furnished the residence with Philippine-made furniture, art and accessories that appear right at home amid the elegant surroundings. Only four floors (including a basement) are currently in use right now, since we're told that the government can ill-afford to rehabilitate the top three floors.

Even without a disco, though, the ambassador has installed even more effective technology for oiling the social gears of diplomacy. After a buffet dinner of well-loved Filipino favorites, we went down to the basement for coffee and karaoke. When he entertains the other UN delegations, he said, a karaoke session always ensures that the evening ends on a high note.

* * *

WORK at the UN mission has been particularly hectic since the Philippines became a member of the Security Council. Indeed, a senior official said "about 90 percent" of the mission's workload these days has to do with Security Council affairs. Perhaps the heavy demands on his staff is one reason Ambassador Baja requested that the majority of his staff be composed of younger and relatively "junior" members of the diplomatic service. A member of our delegation, who had occasion to work with UN missions over the last decade or so, attests to the energy and conscientiousness of the mission staff this time around.

A member of the Philippine delegation is Cleofe Natividad, gender and development coordinator for the Department of Foreign Affairs. It was she who guided the delegation members through the steps involved in negotiations in an international conference such as this "Beijing + 10" Review.

Coordinating matters between the mission and the delegation is Ivy Banzon, a young foreign service officer, who has impressed everyone with her intimate knowledge of the issues under discussion and her ability to summarize talking points.

Of course, the support the mission has lent the delegation was made possible only because of the support rendered by the ambassador himself, who impressed everyone early on when he not only took part in a forum on women in conflict situations, but also stayed on to take questions at the open forum.

I should also mention that the current chair of the UN body monitoring compliance of governments with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw) is retired Ambassador Rosario Manalo, who has been one of the country's leading lights in the international women's movement.

A 1790 visit to Batangas (2)

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

PEDRO de Castro, an 18th century traveler, tells us that the language spoken in Batangas at the time was Tagalog or Malayo, which he claims is the same thing, but mixed with many words from the Tingues or Negritos, the Borneans, Visayans and other languages of the Orient. In his travels through the province, De Castro describes the inhabitants as being of mixed blood, including Pampangos, Moros, baptized Sangleys, Atheists (this is a strange racial classification but amusing), pagan Tingues, Criolles, and Malabars.

Taal and the surrounding towns produced rice, corn, sugar cane, salt and a lot of cotton, good table cloths, handkerchiefs, trousers, *sayas, rayadillos, sinamays, tapiz* and other similar weaves. The people there brought garlic, onions, some cacao, wax, cattle and pigs to Manila and other provinces and earned a good income from the business. There were a lot of trees in the surrounding mountains but these were not cut down.

Within Taal and on the banks of the river that flowed from the volcano in a deep ravine reached by descending 80 rungs of granite steps, sad, melancholic and humid was the *hermita* of Ntra. Sra. de la Concepcion of Caysasay. The chapel was of one nave with a transept, dome, two towers and a stone house for travelers that the Chinese constructed in the last century. It was 50 varas long, 10.5 wide and 13 high. The walls were a vara thick, the coral stone very strong and solid. The bells, also from the previous century, were of very good materials.

The interior appeared dark, sad and humid, and if you removed a brick, a spring of water would gush out. The frontal on the main altar had as décor an eagle with two heads and extended wings. There was only one room from the sacristy which had no decoration and held a baptismal font of metal from China.

The image of the Virgin was a third of a vara in height and her hands were inclined toward the right shoulder. It was slender and adorned in a European manner (*estofado*); one eye was larger than the other and the color was worn out in many parts. She represented a very ancient Immaculate Conception and, according to Father Gaspar's chronicle, she was fished out of the river in the year 1611. Many of the miracles attributed to her were painted on the walls, but since these had not been approved by Manila, a visiting provincial had them removed. (Alas and alack for us.)

What was certain was that the devotion to her encompassed the whole province. Masses were said in her honor and she was covered with *ex-votos*, promises and rosaries. She was very rich in gold, in silver, pearls and clothes, ornaments and jewelry from the people. Every Saturday, devotees would come to kiss the image and recite the rosary before her.

The women of Batangas wore gold jewelry and, according to the first part of the Franciscan chronicles, the church at Caysasay was richly decorated with gold objects. In the coast of Taal and Bauang, there were many traces of ancient gold mines. Father Colin says the same thing in his narrative.

As for the volcano, it took an hour on horseback for De Castro's party to reach the lake. Throughout the uneven, rocky road were seen gorges and ravines as well as fields of rice, sugar cane and corn. There was sage, wild mountain flowers and ferns. There were cotton buds for pillows, papayas, camachiles, palm and other forest flora. The king had asked that coconut trees, *cabonegro* and *buri* be planted, but the area was bare of these species. The people explained that the volcano had destroyed everything.

When they arrived at Laguna de Bombon, they rested and waited for the wife of the mayor, D. Sabina de Aquino, who came in a boat with musicians, hams and bottles of wine that helped make it a pleasant trip. The lagoon had water that was both sweet and salty and which flowed into the river in Taal. In the lagoon were many *paraos*, with their goods that came and went from Tanauan. There were many *caracoles* where the fishermen caught *sabalo*, tuna and other exquisite fish but one had to be careful of crocodiles and ferocious eels.

In the middle of the lagoon was a medium-sized mountain some one league in length and half a league wide. This was the volcano or chimney. The whole mountain was bald, sad and melancholy, covered with sand and ashes that the volcano kept spitting out. De Castro wanted to climb to the top but was dissuaded because the ground was so soft that people sank into it. Some 10 years before there was a lot of grass and the natives would climb to the zenith to stare some 300 varas down and see boiling water of many colors which exuded the odor of sulfur. On the southeast part of the lake was another little island that was also a volcano and spit out smoke and even fire at times. In all, there were three volcanoes of fire, there being another high point in the lagoon.

There is no record of the eruption of this volcano in ancient times, but during the time of Father Albuquerque, the first prior, the volcano erupted several times and the people asked him to say Mass in the lake. During Fr. Tomas de Abreu's tenure, a huge cross was brought up by 400 men, after which the eruptions ceased and fertility returned to the area.

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

A new face of brain drain

THIS is a reaction to Dona Pazzibugan's article, "Now, gov't losing English teachers to call centers" (PDI, 02/15/05). She validated our observation that potential English teachers end up choosing to work as call center agents because of the lucrative pay, despite the general ill-effects this kind of job poses to one's security, health, family and social life.

It saddens and, at the same time, alarms me to see our country suffering a new face of brain drain on top of the ongoing exodus of our professionals for greener pastures abroad. In UP, I have seen some of our good professors being pirated by private and international universities. Now, our young graduates are discouraged to teach because of low pay.

Call centers, which are mostly American-owned, exploit our local professionals right here in our country. Call center agents may not realize this because of the higher salaries they get. What they don't know is that they are not getting what is due them. The very reason American companies set up the call centers here is that we provide efficient but cheap labor.

Teachers are modern-day heroes and it is about time our government and society recognize this. The recognition is long overdue. Teachers must be properly compensated for the tremendous amount of work they perform. They may not be making dollar remittances, unlike the overseas Filipino workers, but they are the ones who prepare our people, especially the young, for the careers they wish to pursue. They deserve a much better treatment.

The Constitution decrees the highest budgetary priority for education and directs the State to ensure that teaching will attract and retain its rightful share of the best available talents through adequate remuneration and job satisfaction. Likewise, it mandates the State to enhance the right of teachers to professional advancement.

The fact is education is not on top of our country's budget list. Debt servicing is. And intelligence operations. Thus, the pathetic state of our public education and sorry situation of the public school teachers.

The government always uses the country's fiscal crisis as an excuse for not increasing the salary of our teachers and government employees, in general. This crisis, however, is self-inflicted and a direct result of the government's "globalization" and pro-elite policies and corruption.

The plight of the English teachers is not an isolated case. It is but a microcosm of the predicament of the academic system as a whole. I believe that the education sectors must be more resolute and aggressive in clamoring for their demands for better pay, better working conditions, career development, and others.

—JANICE CAMBRI-SAN JOSE,
Department of English Studies and Comparative Literature, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City

Just returning a favor

THE ENTIRE organization of the Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative Inc. (INEC) has always championed the cause of the member-consumers. This is the least that we can do if only to recognize the enduring legacy of the Rural Electrification Program.

INEC has, through the years, grown by leaps and bounds. Along the way, it must have attracted some "covetous interests," hence, the flak it gets left and right.

In reference to a news story titled "Marcos grave to get free supply of power," (PDI, 01/15/05) INEC director Ernesto Abara was quoted to have said that the Marcos mausoleum's future monthly electrical consumption will be charged to system loss.

We would like to assure the public, in general, and our member-consumers, in particular, that this is not the case. The projected P10,000-monthly consumption (more or less) will be charged to whatever savings the cooperative will realize. This everybody will find out from the excerpts of the minutes of the board meeting held last Jan. 21 at the Bangui, Ilocos Norte sub-office.

Likewise, we would like to make it crystal clear that only the mausoleum's account will be dealt with in this manner. The electrical connection to the Marcos White House has been separated. INEC reached this consensus if only to recognize and return a favor—given to us on a silver platter—to the father of the Rural Electrification Program.

We hope we have made our position clear on this matter.

—WILLIAM K. MARDERS, information officer, Ilocos Norte Electric Cooperative Inc., Suyo, Dingras, Ilocos Norte

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Recruiting for the NPAs

THIS is to condemn in strongest terms the recent murder of Abelardo "Abel" Ladera. The motive for his murder is very clear. The masterminds wanted to silence him and physically eliminate him for his pro-people stand in the Hacienda Luisita issue.

The Northern Luzon Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines had linked Ladera, a councilor, to the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army. The Nolcom even said that Ladera was a nephew of Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, spokesman of the CPP. Purportedly, Ladera was one of the ringleaders in the "grand design" to exploit the Hacienda Luisita issue.

Is it not AFP's grand design to link Ladera to the CPP-NPA before murdering him? Linking Ladera to the armed revolutionary Left was a de facto threat to his life.

I know that no amount of investigation can bring back to life the murdered good councilor. Still, it is but rightful to demand that the government of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo conduct an honest to goodness investigation. Sparing the sacred cows in the AFP-Nolcom and the murderous masterminds would surely drive more warm bodies to the ranks of the CPP-NPA.

—MELCHOR ALTAMIRONA,
Banlic, Cabuyao, Laguna,
mixedjuices123@yahoo.co.uk

Terrorists with national IDs

THE FEB. 14 bombings in the cities of Makati, General Santos and Davao are being used as a pretext to implement a national ID system. The Arroyo administration is trying to resurrect a proposal long dead. The Filipino people frustrated such a plan during the Ramos presidency. The Supreme Court subscribed to the will of people by explicitly declaring it illegal.

The ID system will not solve the problem of terrorism. In the first place, the current state is as guilty of various forms of terrorist attacks on the people. The abusive military and police forces have IDs but they are the ones who sow terror among the people. Who were responsible for the massacres and killings of civilians and members of progressive organizations? Since Marcos' time up to the present, elements of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippine National Police have been the top violators of human rights in the country.

Corrupt public officials, including the President, senators, congressmen and high ranking AFP and PNP officials, all have IDs to show off themselves as legal entities. But what are they doing to the people? They are virtually killing and terrorizing the Filipino people by implementing anti-people laws, policies and programs. The proposed VAT hike is just one example. And the government that they control constantly denies our people of basic and social services while allocating a big chunk of the budget for the payment of onerous debts. Their callousness has led our people to the desert of constant hunger, illiteracy, homelessness and sickness. Each day, poor peasants, workers and the unemployed are threatened with social and economic insecurity. Each day, our children are made to face a bleak future. Are these not acts of terrorism? The economic assault on the people is pervasive and is more explosive than any bombing incident.

The proposed national ID system is a façade that tries to cover up the state's own acts of terrorism against the Filipino people.

—NORMA P. DOLLAGA,
general secretary,
Kapatirang Simbahan para sa Bayan (Kasimbayan),
kasimbyn@tri-isys.com,
879 Edsa, Quezon City

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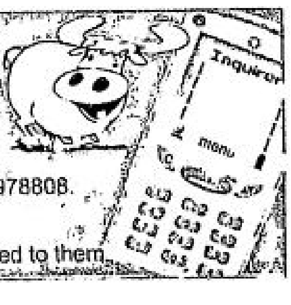

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₱1B in income seen from sand quarry

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—The quarry industry now thriving on sand spewed out by Mt. Pinatubo's 1991 eruptions can raise as much as P1 billion in yearly revenues for Pampanga, an official of a nongovernment organization here said on Thursday.

The amount, according to Fr. Resty Lumanlan, chair of the Save Pampanga Movement, would make the P72-million income proposed by the Natural Resources Development Corp. (NRDC) seemed like "peanuts."

Lumanlan said this prospect should make the provincial government explore offers other than the NRDC's.

"Why are we focused on the NRDC proposal?" asked the leader of the SPM, the same group that rallied Kapampangans in pressing the Ramos administration to save Pampanga on the heels of the worst lahar onslaught in October 1995.

Lumanlan said Porac alone, the hometown of Gov. Mark Lapid, could produce in a short period the P36 million that NRDC intends to give the provincial government as net minimum annual share.

The NRDC, the corporate arm of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, offered to give another P36 million to towns and villages from which the sand is taken. The rest of the income will fund the DENR's reforestation program.

NRDC Chair Victor Corpus gave the deal after the task force, headed by Lapid, generated only P10.5 million in 2004 or 28 truckloads of sand daily.

The capitol's three-year income of P45 million was way below the P337 million that the NRDC collected between 1999 and 2001 when it first took over the quarry industry on the strength of ousted President Joseph Estrada's Proclamation 66.

Lumanlan said the P1-billion income could be raised from the P300 tax levied on every truckload of sand, from the 40-percent excise tax and other local sand and gravel taxes.

Lumanlan, quoting his own sources, said between 3,000 and 6,000 trucks haul sand from Pampanga daily.

"But let us not confine ourselves with the NRDC proposal," he said.

The NRDC proposal to collect quarry taxes on behalf of the provincial government was junked by the provincial board on Jan. 24. The agency, however, refiled the proposal in a congressional hearing on March 1.

DISPLACED
A resident of Panamao, Sulu, watches over her belongings after she was forced to flee her home as a result of fighting between government soldiers and rebels loyal to jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari. Hundreds of villagers left their homes to avoid getting caught in the crossfire of the renewed fighting between the Moro rebels and government forces.
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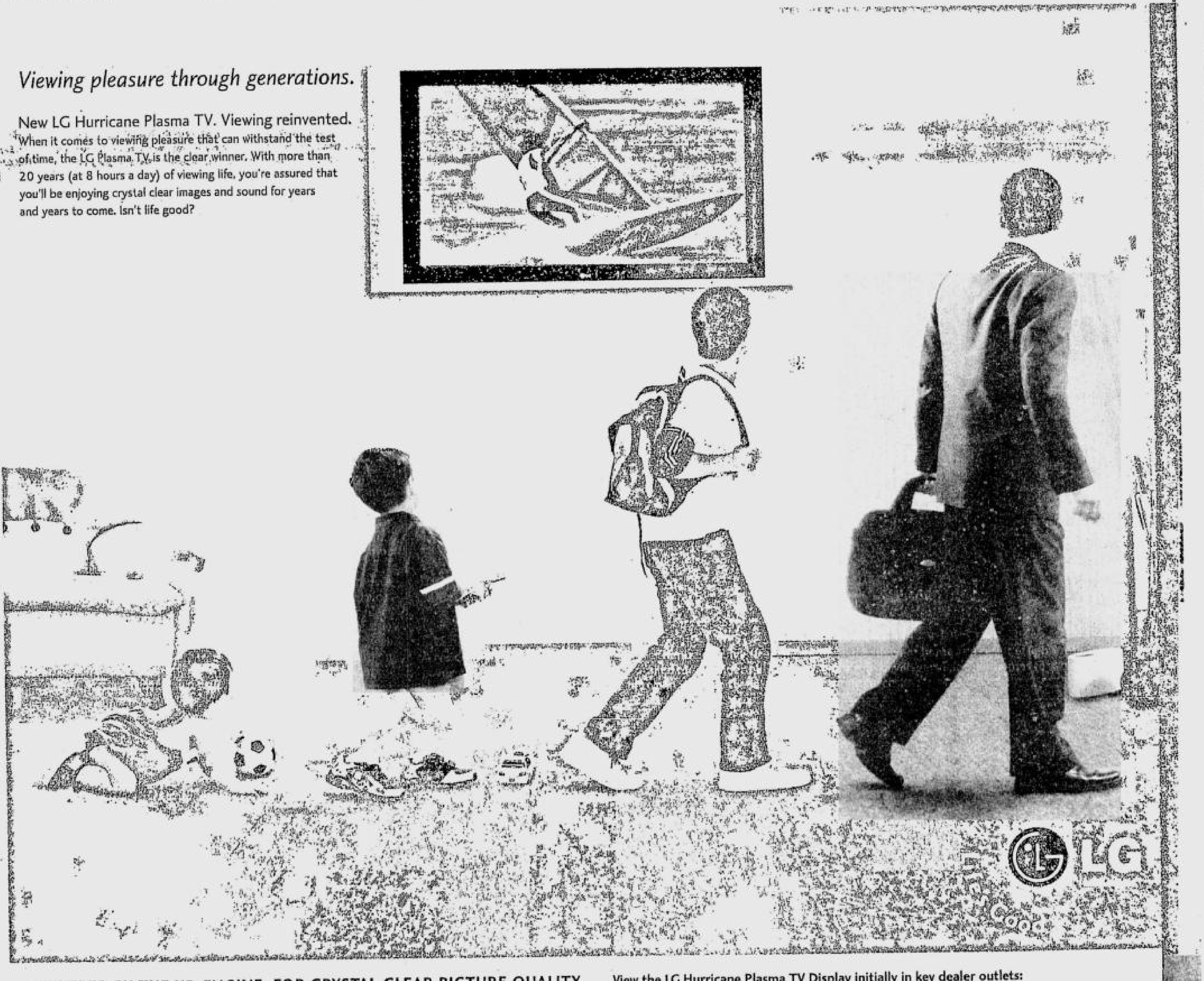

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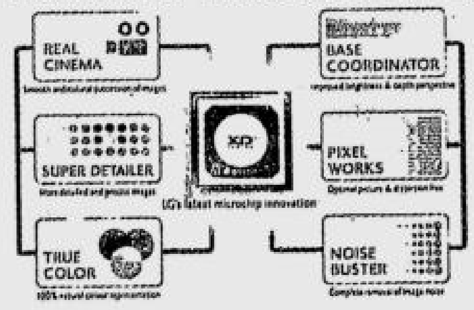

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Ex-MNLF men show mettle in farming

By Edwin O. Fernandez
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ISULAN, Sultan Kudarat—Former Moro combatants, who have turned to hybrid rice farming here, have proven that there is no substitute for hard work and the application of scientific knowledge in rice growing.

During a recent harvest festival in Barangay Dansuli here, former members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) made a record harvest of 10.12 metric tons of *palay* per hectare.

Sonnie Bansil, former MNLF commander, said he could hardly believe that his group of about 25 farmers could produce that much.

"This is our first time to get this much," he told agriculture and civil officials, who graced the harvest festival.

"We only expected about six to seven tons per hectare. I was really surprised because these crops were infested by insects and could have been a failure because of the onset of dry spell," he said.

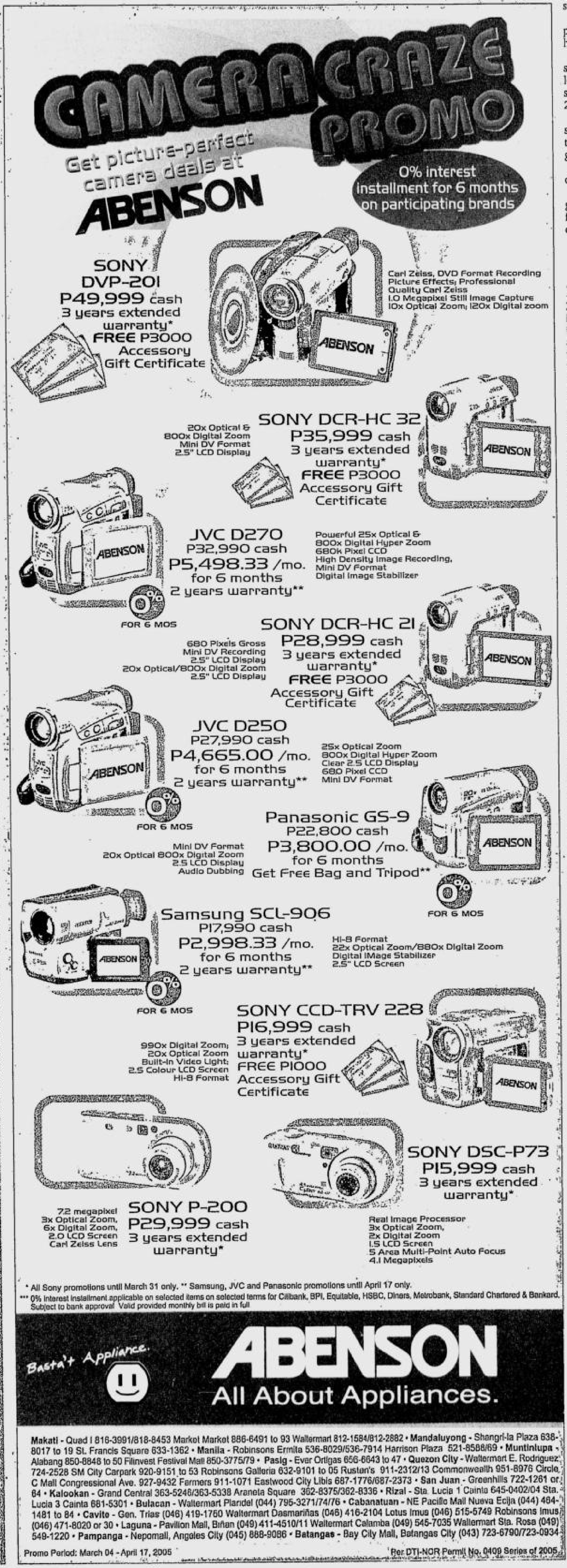
The seeds that the former Moro combatants planted were provided by the US-funded Livelihood Enhancement and Peace Program (LEAP).

Amalia Datukan, LEAP area manager for south and central Mindanao region, said at least 50 hectares of rice field in Barangay Dansuli were planted with BioSeed hybrid rice by 25 farmer-beneficiaries of the LEAP-USAID.

She said the former combatants and their spouses were trained on the proper use of fertilizers and water management to ensure good production.

"And they applied what they have learned correctly as proven by their harvests," she said.

Sultan Kudarat Gov. Pax Mangudadatu gave 25 water buffalos and 25 plows to the former Moro rebels as "incentive for their excellence in farming."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ROUNDUP

2 soldiers wounded

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Two soldiers were wounded in an encounter with suspected bandits and rebels in Barangay Lanao Dakula in Parang, Sulu yesterday afternoon. The military said five Abu Sayyaf bandits were also killed in the fighting that lasted for more than two hours. Brig. Gen. Agustin Dema-ala, Task Force Comet chief, said the bandits, along with suspected members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) still loyal to jailed leader Nur Misuari, tried to reoccupy their camp in Parang. Government forces captured that camp on March 1. Dema-ala said the bandits and rebels, led by Commander Albader Parad and Commander Hadon Adak, tried to get inside the camp at around 3:15 p.m. while government troops, under Col. Pablo Lorenzo of the 35th IB, were conducting clearing operations. The two wounded soldiers were brought to the Asturias Hospital in Sulu. But Dema-ala said they failed to recover the bodies of the slain bandits. Dema-ala said.

Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

4 workers killed

MANOLO FORTICH, Bukidnon—Four government workers were killed when the vehicle they were riding in slammed into a grader on Monday night. Heracleo Cahilat, Adel Secretaria, Elizabeth Yee and Manalo Cruz, all employees of the Bukidnon provincial office, were on their way home from Cagayan de Oro when their vehicle hit a grader owned by the Del Monte Philippines. The accident happened during heavy rains at around 6:30 p.m. It was the first downpour in the past two months. The victims had just come from Cagayan de Oro to pay for vehicle parts for the provincial capitol office. Felix Cadiz, the driver of the heavy equipment, narrated that as he was going uphill, he saw the Toyota Hilux pickup speeding toward his direction. "I saw the speeding and zigzagging pick-up at about 25 meters from me so I tried to swerve to the shoulder but suddenly I heard a loud slam on the blades of the grader," Cadiz said. The heavy equipment is being used to lift submerged Del Monte vehicles in the plantation.

Grace C. Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Illegal lumber confiscated

CITY OF CALAPAN—Police on Tuesday intercepted a jeep carrying 135 flitches of assorted illegally sawn lumber or about 575 board feet on March 8, along the national highway in Barangay Guinobatan here, said Oriental Mindoro police director Senior Supt. Marcos L. Flores. Police identified the driver as Michael Ortega, 34, of Barangay Mamangan, Baco. Initial investigation said the lumber belonged to Dionisio Ortega, 46, businessman and resident of Barangay Tawiran here. The driver told police that the lumber came from a dealer named Dexter Hardware based in Barangay Sta. Rosa II, Baco town, to be delivered to an unidentified buyer.

Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

12-year jail for Cafgu, son

BACOLOD CITY—A Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (Cafgu) member and his son were sentenced Thursday to 12 years in prison for killing a rebel returnee in Cauayan town in 1994. Jovito Alegado, 65, and his son, Jose Alcid, 43, were found guilty for the death of Roger Campos and were also ordered by Kabankalan Regional Trial Court Judge Henry Arles to be immediately detained at the National Penitentiary. The court also ordered them to indemnify the heirs of Campos P50,000. Campos, who was 34 at the time of his death, was shot to death by the Alegados over a long-standing dispute.

Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

Ex-Tayabas dad slain

TAYABAS, Quezon—A former Tayabas town councilor was shot dead by at least three unidentified armed suspects inside the victim's motorcycle parts store in Barangay Malaoa this town Thursday afternoon. The police identified the victim as Victor de Torres, 27, resident of this town and a municipal employee. He once served as chair of the Tayabas Sangguniang Kabataan that earned him a seat in the municipal council. The victim's wife, Wenda Saberola, now a town councilor, was due to give birth to their second child. Investigators said that while the victim was manning the store at around 5 p.m., two of the suspects approached him and without any provocation, shot De Torres point-blank. The remaining suspect acted as lookout in front of the store. The victim suffered several fatal bullet wounds in different parts of the body that caused his instant death. Police said the suspects casually walked away after the shooting. Investigators recovered eight empty shells and five slugs from the scene of the crime.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

INQUIRER Visayas
E-mail: inq_cebu@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto

Dying girl keeps hope alive for family

By Hazel P. Villa
Iloilo City

> *But Job answered and said, Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!*
> —The Book of Job, The Bible (King James Version)

EDUARDO Guillamas, a 48-year-old fish broker, used to earn enough to support his wife and their 11 children.

But life gave him several low blows and he is now jobless, his family is forced to eat only twice a day, and they might lose their house and say goodbye to a dying eighth child.

The situation gets heavier because Eduardo and his wife Jocelyn could hardly bring it in themselves to leave 12-year-old Kristine Mae or "Tata" as her enlarged and overworked heart may stop anytime.

On the other hand, if they stayed at home with her, the rest of the household will have barely anything to eat.

Living with the Guillamas couple in their house at No. 30 Democracia St. in Jaro District, Iloilo City are 10 of their children, a son-in-law, three grandchildren, and a loyal house help who stayed even without getting any salary and has been treated as a family member.

"I cry everyday when I see Tata suffering and my other children getting on with life without any complaints," said Jocelyn in Hiligaynon.

Blue baby

Keeping their miseries at bay is Tata's determination to survive. As a "blue baby," she was given only six to eight years to live if she did not undergo surgery.

When she was 7 months old, Tata was diagnosed by Dr. Doris Mendoza, a pediatric cardiologist in Iloilo City, to have a cyanotic type of congenital heart disease known as Tetralogy of Fallot (TOF). The condition consists of four anomalies—the most important being a large ventricular septal defect (VSD) or hole in the wall separating the right and left ventricles, and a markedly reduced blood flow to the lungs because of an obstruction in the pulmonary valve or artery.

Tata thus becomes very blue and breathes rapidly due to lack of oxygen in the bloodstream, especially after crying or straining, or after prolonged playing.

Jocelyn said Tata had been hospitalized twice—when she was 2 years old and on Jan. 15 for pneumonia and inability to walk.

Despite the pains, Tata chooses not to bring more burden to her parents.

"We had no money and so, Tata said she'd rather not go to the hospital," said Jocelyn, who was only 16 when she married Eduardo, then 20.

This also explained why Tata was brought back to her first pediatric cardiologist (Mendoza) after almost a decade.

"The doctors said we were lucky her life was prolonged," said Eduardo as he looked at his frail daughter playing even as she listened to the adults talk about her.

The daily struggle to take care of 11 children has so overwhelmed the couple that it was, at first, difficult for them to accept that Tata had a heart problem, and that it needed early surgical intervention. Besides, the child seldom complained about her pains.

JOHN MICHAEL P. AVELINO/CONTRIBUTOR

JOCELYN Guillamas and sickly daughter Kristine Mae hold on to their faith that life will be better.

However, the "slings of outrageous fortune" struck the Guillamas family just when they were mightily holding on to one of their beloved.

Staying alive

Just after Tata was brought home from the hospital, with doctors saying that a risky surgical operation and "supportive medication" were the last options, the second child, Karl Anthony, figured in a motorcycle accident in Palawan on Feb. 18 that left him unconscious. He woke up the following day and was sidelined for a time, working on odd jobs that gave him enough only for his own food.

"We are living by the day. Rice is important; we buy soup and a viand and eat only twice a day. Friends give and I make do with what I can work on," said Eduardo in Hiligaynon, his big frame showing better days even though he himself is diabetic and hypertensive.

"The medicines that we buy for Tata are only those that we can afford," said Jocelyn, adding that she has a P30-budget for four kinds of medicines. There are days that Tata can't take her medicine.

To top all these concerns, the family could lose its house because the owner of the lot wants to reclaim and sell it. The Guillamases have been living there in the last 40 years, starting from Jocelyn's mother. The owner has brought them to court together with their neighbors.

Holding on to hope

"The doctors told us Tata's heart would stop beating anytime. But the way I see it, she is different from other patients because she has reached 12 years," said Eduardo.

Mendoza, who is also a professor of pediatrics of West Visayas State University College of Medicine, has recommended a heart operation for Tata that should have been done when Tata was a baby.

"Because of complications that have set in through the years without benefit of a heart operation, a heart surgery at this time does not favor a good prognosis. The patient may be better off without surgery at this point in her life," said Mendoza.

"Supportive therapy through medications to prolong her life may be the only option," wrote Dr. Jonas Del Rosario, one of the country's leading young pediatric cardiologists, who was recently awarded one of 2005's Ten Outstanding Young Men.

For Mendoza, "the best we could do for Tata, if not to add years to her life, is to add life to her remaining years." This means giving her "a good quality of life" until her heart finally decides to stop beating. This means daily medication, nutritious food, and a happy family life.

Tata has accepted her fate and is even the strongest among the family members, she said. Her determination to get on with life showed in her Grade 3 Progress Report Card for the third grading this year. She had never been tardy, but was absent for 10 days, only because she was hospitalized. She also has grade As in Character Building that covered criteria, such as honesty, courtesy, industry, and love of God.

Tata, who now weighs a flimsy 40 kilos and stands 136 centimeters, always went to school when she felt better and cried when she is made to stay home.

School is now but a memory of good times. Tata's recent request was to be taken to a farm and ride a horse. But when Jocelyn tried to bring her out, she vomited and had a headache and so, it was back home again.

The Guillamas family is resigned to fate, but seeing Tata struggling to live gives them hope that with the same faith and determination, they can weather their own tribulations.

Those who want to help the Guillamas family may get in touch with Jocelyn through cell phone no. 09198103979

For love of dancing

By Vicente S. Labro
Tacloban City

IN A DILAPIDATED one-story building at No. 42 Esperas Ave., Tacloban City, members of the Leyte Dance Theater hone their talents in preparation for a performance tour in the United States this summer.

It will be the fifth trip to the US of the dance troupe headed by Jess de Paz, its artistic director and choreographer. The group presented "Danhani" in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2002, with the provincial government of Leyte as main sponsor.

"Danhani" is coined from "*dida han hani*," which in the Waray language means "in our past." This is why the presentation's subtitle is "A Glimpse of Our Past," De Paz explained.

The group will present 18 performances from April 14 to June 14 in California, Texas, Florida, Virginia, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and other states.

The tour will culminate with the group's participation in the International Festival for Arts and Ideas in New Haven, Connecticut, he added.

The tour is upon the invitation of Filipino-American associations in the US. Its sponsors in Tacloban City are the Department of Tourism in Eastern Visayas, the city government, Pintados Foundation Inc. and Leyte Park Resort.

De Paz said the "Danhani" summer presentation would be in five suites "covering different regions in the Philippines." It will showcase ethnic dances of highlanders and seafarers, the rural culture, Spanish-influenced dances, and a performance with a nationalistic theme.

A calling found

The Leyte Dance Theater, a private entity, is composed of 10 male and 10 female students aged 18 to 30 years old, mostly coming from the Leyte Normal University. It has four staff members—De Paz, his assistants Jerry Mores and Christopher Flauta, and Daniel Guarino, who designs the props, set and costumes aside from being an alternate dancer or musician.

They all have one thing in common—love of dance and dancing—and this is what kept the group going.

De Paz himself has spent more than 30 years of his life as a dance enthusiast. A failure early in his career prompted him to share his talent to those who cannot afford the cost of training.

He disclosed that it was his dream after college to pursue a dancing career. He failed thrice in his auditions with three leading companies in the country. "This [prompted] me to concentrate on teaching dance rather than be a dancer."

"Instead of commercializing dance, what became important [to me] was giving opportunities to those with potentials but cannot afford to have formal training in dance," he said.

As he embarked on his mission, De Paz continued to develop his talent by studying under the masters.

He auditioned with Joji Felix Velarde and was readily taken in as apprentice and given free lessons in ballet and jazz. Then he joined the Pamana Ballet Company upon the invitation of Anita Kane and toured with it.

In the summer of 1971 and 1972, he trained at the Cultural Center of the Philippines under the tutelage of Alice Reyes, Eddie Elejar, Tony Fabella, Tina Santos, Ester Rimpos and some world-renowned choreographers, like Martha Graham, Pauline Kohner, Ian Strepling, Miro Zolan, Norman Walker and William Morgan.

In 1983, he attended the Joffrey School of Dance at the American Ballet Center in New York as a dance scholar and observed the leading dance companies of America. In 1991, he was named Philippine representative to Bangkok in the Asean-sponsored Training in Dance, Music and Choreography.

His efforts were not in vain. He won the "Best in Choreography" award in the National "Himig" Competition for eight consecutive years. The feat established for him a name in the world of choreography.

Greatest achievements

De Paz also became a researcher of regional dances, such as the "Gaway-Gaway," which gained national prominence in the 1985 National Folk festival. To him, the dance is his most important contribution to folk dancing.

Many of his artistic works were appreciated, but De Paz still considered his former dance students who not only excelled in their careers but were also passing on his legacy to the next generation as his greatest achievement in life.

Among his former students are internationally renowned dance artists like choreographer Douglas Nierras and dancer Danny Marshall of Powerdance and Alden Lugnasin, the associate artistic director of Ballet Philippines.

De Paz's assistants in the Leyte Dance Theater are also his former students.

Mores, 23, said he was a dancer of the Leyte Normal University Dance Theater from 1999 to 2002 before joining the Leyte Dance Theater, also in 2002. A physical education instructor in one of the universities in Tacloban, he choreographed several award-winning festivals that participated in the Kasadyaan Festival in Leyte and the national Aliwan Festival in Manila. He is also a dancer of the Leyte Dance Theater.

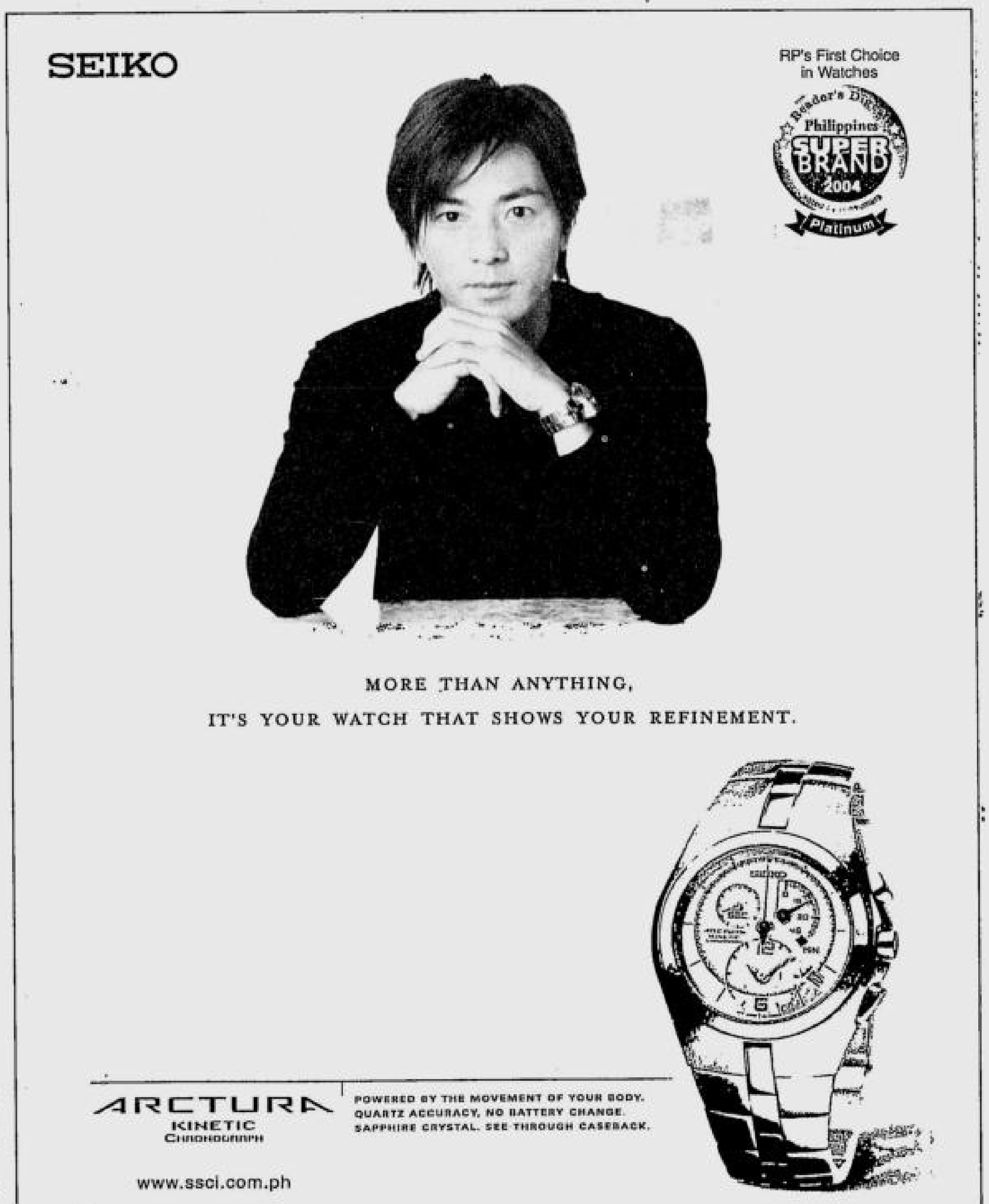
Like his boss, he said, he found fulfillment in sharing what he had learned to others.

Mores also assists De Paz in training the Kaliawan Performing Art Group, a scholarship program for 20 public school pupils in Tacloban sponsored by Wilson Chan of Leyte Park Resort, and the Leyte Dance Theater II, an apprentice group composed of 20 high school students in the city and sponsored by Filipino-American associations in the United States.

"The reason for my early retirement from government service was to give more attention to the training of dance students through subsidies granted by sponsors," said De Paz, who had been teaching for years at the Leyte State College.

The energetic members of the Leyte Dance Theater have to sweat it out during rehearsals to ensure that their audience in the US will again appreciate their talents. And while resting, they have to sew or decorate their costumes because they cannot afford to hire someone to do the job.

Lack of money has never been a problem to this bunch of young Leyteños and Samareños who, like De Paz, have made dance their passion in life.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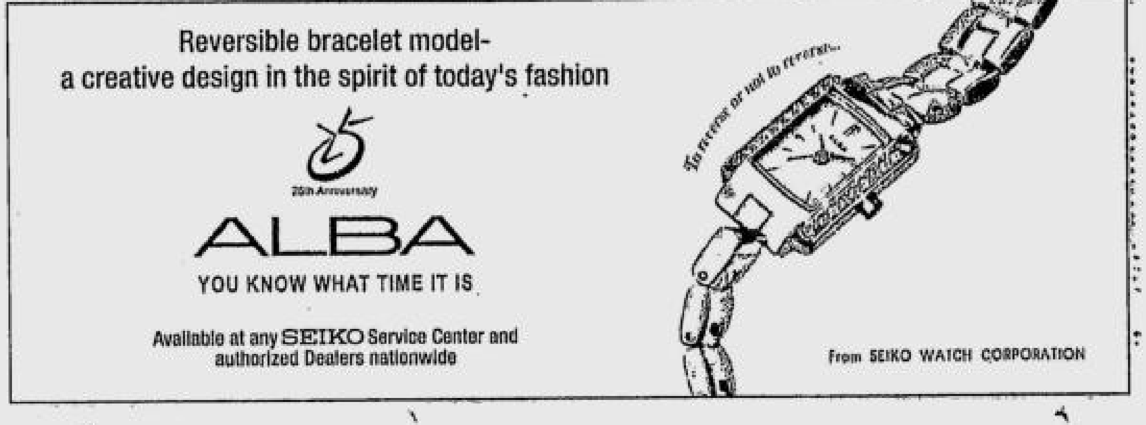
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SAMAR MINING CONTROVERSY

Nickel hauling stirs protests

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Despite the opposition of several residents, the Hinatuan Mining Corp. (HMC) has started hauling its nickel ore stockpiled in Barangay Buenavista, on Manicani Island, Guiuan town in Eastern Samar.

Manuel Sumuok, barangay chair of Buenavista, said the HMC started loading its nickel ore on two waiting barges docked on the village wharf from midnight of March 9 to 3 a.m. of March 10.

He said about 100 residents barricaded the entrance to the dock area at about 1 a.m. yesterday but were dispersed by the police.

"We put up a brave stand for them to stop their hauling operations. But we were stopped by some police officers who were present during that time," Sumuok told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

But he said they would continue holding their barricade "until our clamor for the company not to continue its hauling operations will be heard."

Sacrifice

"We are willing to sacrifice our own lives just for this cause. We are opposed to their hauling operations because we believe that the company will only use the loading operations so it can resume their mining operations in our island, which we strongly oppose," he added.

Leonardo Sibbaluca, Department of Environment and Natural Resources director for Eastern Visayas, said the HMC was able to haul about 46,000 metric tons of the 106,000 metric tons stockpiled in Buenavista.

He, however, said there was nothing he could do to stop the loading operations because it was covered by a "lawful order" and would not pose any environmental hazard.

Defensor order

On Nov. 22, 2004, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor ordered the Mines and Geosciences Bureau to issue an Ore Transport Permit to the HMC.

"There was an order issued by our secretary allowing the HMC to load its nickel ore stockpiled in the island. I am just a regional director and I could not disobey the decision of our secretary," Sibbaluca said.

He asked the Manicani residents to allow HMC to load its stockpile of nickel ore. He said, however, that it would be a different story if HMC would resume its operations.

Manicani Island is the second largest in the municipality of Guiuan. It has four barangays—Banaag, San Jose, Buenavista and Hamorawon.

In 1991, the HMC was granted a permit to conduct nickel ore mining in Manicani for 25 years and with a total mining area of 1,164.53 hectares.

Nickel is one of the primary minerals used in stainless steel manufacturing.

Political blood

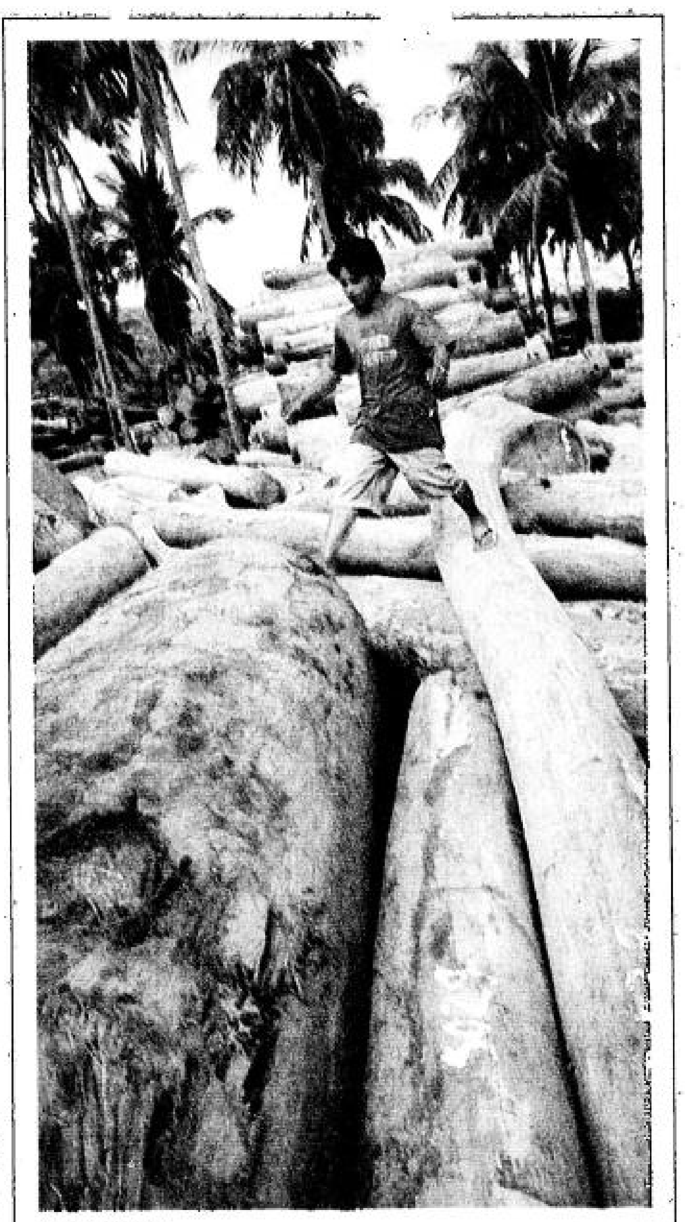
The president of HMC, Salvador Zamora II, is a brother of San Juan Rep. Ronaldo Zamora.

The HMC ceased operations in 1994 due to the failing nickel prices in the world market but it made moves to resume operations in 2000.

But many residents had been opposed to the mining operations due to its adverse effects on the environment. In 2001, a mining engineer was killed by irate protestors opposed to the mine. On April 30, 2001, an antimining protestor was crushed to death.

In May 1, 2001, the DENR issued a suspension order against the HMC due to the opposition of the residents and after results of its investigation showed that the mining operations had caused "aquatic and soil siltation."

As a result, the HMC was not allowed to haul 150,000 metric tons of nickel ore, which the company now wanted to transport out of the island.



LEFTOVER JESS YUSON

A resident of Dingalan, Quezon, crosses a pile of logs that were ready for processing in a sawmill that had been ordered closed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Dingalan was one of the worst hit by floods and landslides that carried with them hundreds of logs.

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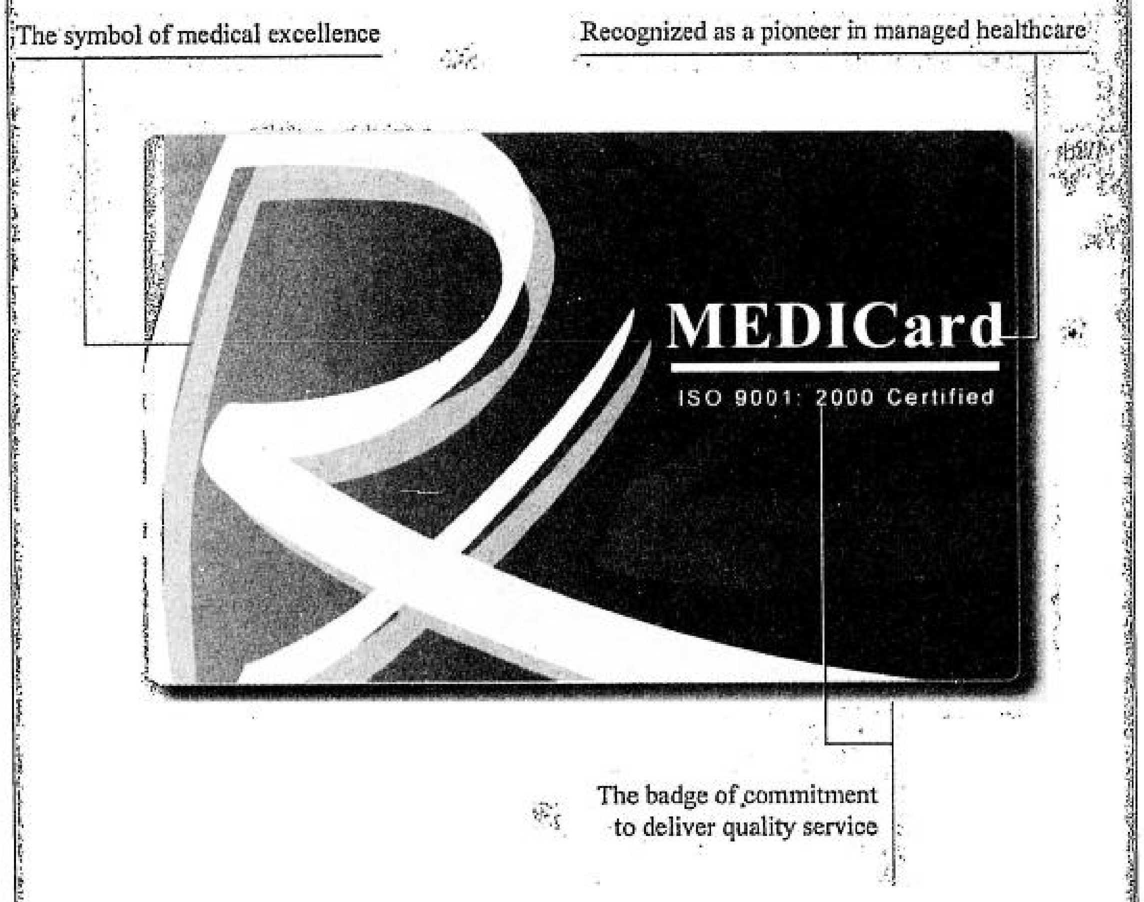
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WATER SUPPLY ADVISORY NO. 3
FOR WEST ZONE CUSTOMERS

Raw water supply from Angat Dam continues to be reduced

Maynilad Water Services Inc urges all West Zone customers to conserve water in order to cope with the worsening shortage of raw water supply from Angat Dam brought about by the continued blockage of the Umiray Tunnel and the mild El Niño phenomenon we are experiencing.

As of March 4, 2005, the average output of the Maynilad Water La Mesa Treatment Plants has gone down from the normal 2,265 million liters a day (MLD) to a low of 1,750 MLD, a drastic reduction of 515 MLD.

27.9% of the entire West Zone concession, particularly the elevated portions, has been affected. These include the following areas:

1. **Quezon City**: Toro Hills, Project 8; San Francisco Del Monte; Commonwealth District; Roosevelt area; Brgy. Talipapa; Brgy. San Bartolome; Forest Hills Subd.; Brgy. Siena; Brgy. Sto. Domingo; Brgy. Lourdes; Brgy. Talayan; Brgy. Sangandaan; Veterans Village, Project 7
2. **Caloocan City**: Sta. Quiteria, Bacsa, portion of Bagong Barrio, UE Subd., University Hills Subd., portion of East Grace Park, West Grace Park (DM Compound, PNR Compound, Heroes del 96), GSIS Hills Subd., and Barangays Llano, Kaybiga, Bagbaguin and Deparo
3. **Valenzuela City**: Gen. T. De Leon, Upper Marulas, Arkong Bato, Brgys. Ugong, Balangkas, Veinte Reales, and San Miguel Hts.
4. **Malabon**: Arancia Subd., Baong Lote, Upper Portion of Potrero, UE Subd., and Barangays Tugatog, Tinejeros, Santolan, Catmon, Tonsuya, Longos, Tanong, San Roque, Ibaba, Dampalit, San Agustin, Acacia, Panghulo, Santolan, Maysilo, Merville Dampalit, Concepcion, Baritan, Flores, and part of Barangays Muzon and Bayan Bayanan;
5. **Navotas**: Brgy. Sipac, Brgy. Tanza, Dagat-Dagatan Area, Northbay Blvd., San Rafael Village, Barangays Tangos and San Roque and portions of Barangays Daang Hari and Bankulasi
6. **Manila**: Sampaloc, Bacood, Sta. Mesa, Sta. Cruz District, portion of Binondo, Pandacan, South Harbor, Paco, Ermita, Malate, and Gagalangin and Tondo Foreshore, Tondo District
7. **Makati**: Barangays San Isidro, Palanan, Pio del Pilar, Bangkal and Magallanes Village
8. **Pasay City**
9. **Parañaque City**: San Antonio Valleys 10 and 11, Marcelo Green Village Phases 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8, Justina Subd., Vitalez Compound, UPS 2 and 5, Camilla Townhomes, elevated portions of Better Living (Annexes 16, 18, 29, 32, 22 and Section 3), Don Agido Bernabe Subd., Remanville Subd. and Brgy. Vitalez
10. **Las Piñas City**: Lozada St., St. Joseph Subdivision, Martinville, Pulang Lupa Dos, Dona Macaria, Pamplona, Manuyo Dos, Brgy. Aldana, Brgy. Ilaya, and Brgy. Zapote
11. **Cavite**: Palico, Imus; Bacoor (Brgy. Habay 1, Brgy. Aniban, Brgy. Salinas, Brgy. Dulong Bayan); and Kawit (Brgy. Binakayan)

To cope with this contingency, Maynilad has intensified leak repairs, disconnection of illegal connections, replacement of old pipes and facilities. It is also adjusting valves in order to maximize the distribution of water to affected areas. More mobile tankers are also being dispatched to attend to the needs of affected residents. Please call up the branch nearest you or Maynilad Hotline 1626 for the tankering schedule in your area. You may also text us at SMART 7001626 (keyword "OTHERS").

Maynilad Water is also aggressively pursuing its water recovery projects aimed at delivering the recovered water to underserved or unserved areas. These projects include the just-finished Tondo Foreshore F-1 Zone Pilot Project, the on-going Dagat-Dagatan Pipe Replacement Project in Caloocan City (and eventually Malabon and Navotas) and the Water Supply Improvement Project in Barangays Baclaran and Tambo in Parañaque City.

In view of this situation, we advise our customers to draw water from their pipelines at the times scheduled in your area and not to use booster pumps directly connected to our mainlines.

Our roving water tankers each have assigned destinations. Thus, we also advise our customers not to obstruct these mobile tankers to facilitate the speedy, efficient and equitable rationing of water to all affected areas. We are doing our best to accommodate everyone in view of the abnormal water supply situation so please be patient and considerate.

Please accept our apology for this unforeseen event which is beyond our control.

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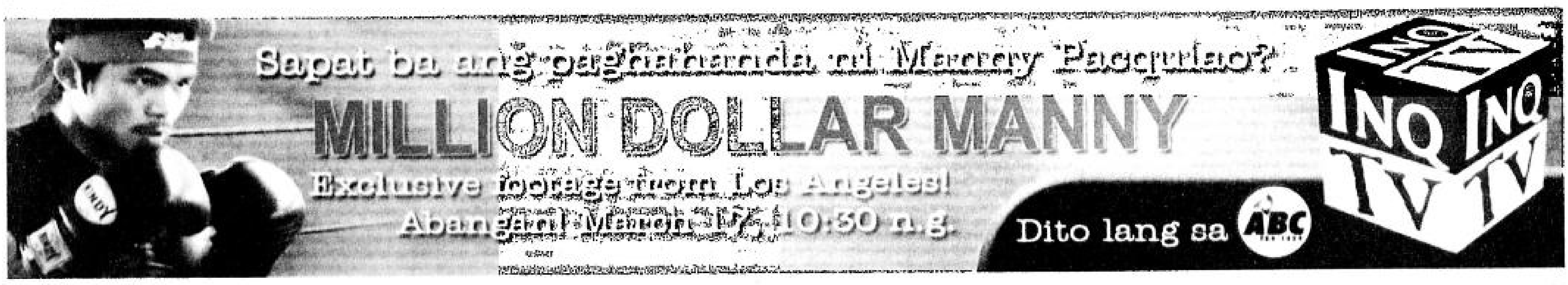
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INQ TV

Rush to save Bobby on

From page A1

mats, the abductors, in the video, called for the withdrawal of Filipino workers in Iraq, now estimated at around 6,500, and for the Philippines to cut its military cooperation with the United States in that country.

"We're not really focused on the date but on the message [being sent to the hostage-takers]," Asuque said in an interview yesterday on ANC.

"We have indications that the message is reaching the abductors," he added.

In an interview with the INQUIRER, Asuque said the message being sent was—"We have no soldiers in Iraq and are not supporting any of the military forces there, especially the US forces, and that the Filipinos there are private citizens helping in the reconstruction."

He said Seguis had had this message translated in Arabic and had been sending it out to intermediaries and sharing it in media interviews.

Family's appeal

In Davao City, the parents of 31-year-old "Bobby" urged Ms Arroyo to give in to the demands of their son's captors.

"We are strongly asking you to heed the captors' demand by making a political statement [about] withdrawing our Philippine cooperation for the US occupation in Iraq," they said in their one-page letter.

Dated March 11, the letter was signed by Tarongoy's father, Tomas Teodoro, and mother Isabelita.

They asked Ms Arroyo to pursue an independent negotiation with the captors, instead of relying on any US effort for the release of their son.

Divine Mercy

"We believe that it's too hard to give in to the demands of the captors but we are asking what you can do ... to give way for Robert's release," they said in their letter written in English.

The Tarongoys also urged the President to review the country's "policy regarding our relationship with the US."

They said this would at least give way to further negotiations.

Yesterday, around 50 people, led by Tarongoy's family, offered prayers during the Divine Mercy hour.

"Hopefully, they [the government] would agree to their demands, like what happened to Angelo," Tarongoy's father said on television.

He was referring to Pampanga truck driver Angelo de la Cruz, who was saved from threatened execution by his Iraqi kidnappers in July after Ms Arroyo agreed to pull out Philippine troops from Iraq.

Tarongoy, an accountant for a Saudi company that does catering for the Iraqi army, was kidnapped on Nov. 1 along with American Roy Hallums from their office in Baghdad's Mansour district. A Nepalese and three Iraqis were also abducted but later freed.

The fate of the American remains unknown.

Prayers from Palace

"Baghdad officials are doing everything they can and we can only help them with prayers," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

Bunye said Seguis had been in Iraq for almost five months trying to seek Tarongoy's release.

"This shows that the President and the administration [are] exerting all efforts that are needed to save our countrymen. It's very difficult to judge the effort but we know Seguis is doing his best," Bunye said.

Ransom demand?

Bunye said he could not comment on a supposed $6 million ransom being demanded by Tarongoy's abductors but he stressed that the government was strictly adhering to its no ransom policy.

Bunye did not comment on the letter from Tarongoy's parents.

"We will let the people on the ground handle the situation. They are in the best position to deal with the situation," Bunye said. "We have full faith and confidence in the team handling this. Everybody is hoping we should be able to bring Tarongoy safe and sound."

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said an outright withdrawal of overseas Filipino workers in Iraq was unlikely.

"They went there not as a contingent but as individuals. They went there to earn a living," Sto. Tomas said in an interview.

About 6,500 OFWs serve in military camps, bases and other facilities operated by the United States-led multinational coalition in Iraq.

Hundreds more are serving in other parts of Iraq.

Hope persists

Sto. Tomas said the labor department had not lost hope that Tarongoy would be ultimately released.

"If they did not intend to release him, he should not have lasted up to now, four months later," she said.

The militant overseas workers sectoral party Migrante said only the Philippines' full withdrawal of its support of US presence in Iraq could save Tarongoy.

Endangering lives

In a statement, Migrante secretary general Connie Bragas-Regalado said Manila's policies on Iraq had endangered the life of Tarongoy and other overseas Filipino workers there.

Despite a ban on workers going to Iraq imposed after De la Cruz's abduction, Filipinos escaping poverty at home have continued to travel to Iraq to seek work, mostly in US military bases.

The number of Filipino workers there has risen from around 4,000 at the time of De la Cruz's release last July. Filipinos working there say it is easy to enter the country by bribing border officials. *With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Reuters*

New names in billionaires' list but Bill Gates still No. 1

From page A1

Forbes magazine's 2005 rankings of the world's billionaires.

The billionaires are richer and more numerous for the second straight year, but the No. 1 spot is unchanged—Microsoft Corp. founder Bill Gates led the list for the 11th year in a row with a net worth of $46.5 billion (34.68 billion euro), slightly less than his $46.6 billion last year.

Investor Warren Buffet was a close second with $44 billion (32.81 billion euro), up from $42.9 billion in 2004.

Mittal—the biggest dollar gainer after quadrupling his net worth by $18.8 billion (14.02 billion euro) to $25 billion (18.64 billion euro)—climbed 59 rungs from last year to No. 3 in 2005.

Helu came in fourth, up from No. 17 in 2004; Saudi Arabian investor Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Alsaud ranked No. 5; and Ikea's Kamprad rose to No. 6 from No. 13 last year.

Rounding out the top 10 were Microsoft's Paul Allen, German supermarket company owner Karl Albrecht, Oracle's Lawrence Ellison—returning to the top 10 after slipping to No. 12 last year—and Wal-Mart Stores Inc.'s S. Robson Walton.

The Waltons

Four other Waltons took spots 11 through 13, with Alice and Helen Walton once again sharing the title of richest woman in the world with $18 billion (13.42 billion euro) each. The five family members of the late Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton are together worth over $90 billion.

The number of billionaires grew to a record 691 from 587 last year, and their total net worth rose by $300 billion (223.73 billion euro) to $2.2 trillion (1.64 trillion euro).

A confluence of factors contributed to the increase, said Forbes associate editor Luisa Kroll, including positive performance by many stock markets around the world—for example, in Ukraine and Iceland, countries that debuted on the list along with Kazakhstan and Poland—and the falling dollar.

Between February 2004 and February 2005, the euro in the 12-nation European Union rose about 4 percent against the dollar, while the British pound rose about 3 percent versus the US currency.

"If you were a euro-based billionaire, you could've done nothing and seen a 20-percent increase" over the past two years, Kroll said.

Soaring commodities like oil and steel also helped make the rich richer, as did the overall recovery of the global economy over the past few years.

Martha Stewart

"2003 was really the valley for the billionaires," Kroll said.

One of this year's 131 new billionaires—and one of the list's 68 women, up from 53 last year—was Martha Stewart, whose wealth swelled to $1 billion despite her conviction for lying about a stock sale and her ensuing five-month prison stint.

Jail time was harder on the fortune of Russia's embattled Yukos oil company chief Mikhail Khodorkovsky, this year's biggest dollar loser after seeing an 85-percent tumble from $15 billion to $2.2 billion.

Not counting the 14 billionaires who died since last February, only 30 people dropped off the list from 2004, including five of Khodorkovsky's colleagues and hotel heir Robert Pritzker.

Tech moguls

Among the big winners were Google's Sergey Brin and Larry Page, who made their first list appearance last year with $1 billion each. The tech moguls jumped nearly 500 spots this year to No. 55, their net worth multiplying to $7.2 billion (5.37 billion euro) after the company's initial public offering in August.

At 31 and 32 years of age, Brin and Page are two of only 29 billionaires under 40—the average age of billionaires this year was 64. But the crown for the youngest billionaire went to Germany's 21-year-old Albert von Thurn und Taxis, with $2 billion (1.49 billion euro).

Minus debts

Forbes senior editor Pete Newcomb said the rankings were compiled using the Feb. 11 closing price of publicly traded stock owned by the billionaires. In the case of private companies, Forbes looked at comparable companies in the same industries in order to determine a value of a billionaire's holdings.

For real estate holdings, the magazine valued properties according to square footage, and subtracted any debt from a property's estimated worth. *AP*

It's a sin not to pay taxes, Church, faithful . . .

From page A1

mind its faithful that tax evasion is a sin and they should pay their income tax before the April 15 deadline.

Or what? Suffer hellfire and eternal damnation?

In a speech he delivered yesterday before a convention of the Chamber of Thrift Banks, Purisima recounted a debate he had with a member of the clergy on whether tax evasion was a sin or not.

The finance chief said the clergyman was convinced that tax evasion was a legal offense but was not sure if the act was a moral transgression.

"How can it not be a sin if it robs Filipinos of opportunities to avail health care services, of enjoying more roads ... I hope the Church would clarify among its members that tax evasion is a sin," Purisima said in his speech.

The finance chief, who's only been on the job for a month, said the goal of making Filipinos develop the habit of religiously paying their taxes could not be realized by the Department of Finance alone. He said the government needed help from the private sector and the Church.

Purisima, a devout Catholic, said he was urging priests to tell churchgoers that tax evasion is a sin, and asked them to remind the faithful of their obligation to pay their income tax on or before the April 15 deadline.

"I hope their sermons (on the days before April 15) will be about the payment of income taxes," he said, eliciting smiles from the audience.

RATE program

Purisima also announced the launching of RATE (Run After Tax Evaders), the DOF's new antitax evasion program. Every week, the agency will file charges against celebrities and high-profile people. The objective of the program is to impress upon the public that tax evasion does not pay.

"The best way to send this message (that the government is serious in running after tax evaders) is to show them that celebrities, some of whom they look up to, can be caught and charged," he said.

The DOF, together with its attached agency, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, had filed tax evasion charges against television host and INQUIRER columnist Cristina Aboitiz-Juan and Dr. Joel Cortez Mendez, whose clients include show biz personalities and socialites.

Purisima said that next week, the DOF and the BIR would again file tax evasion cases against high-profile personalities but declined to disclose their identities.

Go on retreat

He said cracking down on tax evaders is key in the DOF program to encourage tax honesty. Based on estimates, the government loses an average of P200 billion a year due to tax leakages.

With this amount of lost revenues due to tax cheating, Purisima urged taxpayers to go on a Lenten retreat and reflect on whether they have religiously complied with their tax obligations.

SEC, SC leaders . . .

From page A1

mon del Rosario said.

Del Rosario said the challenge was "not just to correct the perception but also to correct the reality."

No one paid notice

The survey of state agencies most sincere in fighting corruption was conducted by the Social Weather Station with the Makati Business Club. The results were based on a survey of some 700 mostly Filipino businessmen covering the period from November 2003 to January 2004.

The results of the survey were part of background papers released by the CAC during a media briefing to show what had been done to counter corruption in the country.

Results of the survey were first released several months ago but hardly anyone took notice, CAC said.

Stressing the negative

"Unfortunately, in our society, there is so much focus on the negative and too little on the positive," Del Rosario said.

The results of the survey for this year are to be released in May, MBC said.

The Supreme Court led the list of agencies most sincere in fighting graft in a survey for 2000. It also topped the list, along with the SEC, in the surveys for 2002 and 2003.

The Department of Education topped the survey in 2001.

The Department of Health was consistently ranked second from 2000, but fell one notch lower last year, the survey results showed.

Ombudsman unimpressive

The DepEd showed an erratic pattern in its campaign against corruption, according to the survey results. From 5th in 2000, it moved up to 1st in 2001, then went down to 4th and 6th, respectively, in the last two surveys.

The Sandiganbayan ranked a high 3rd slot in 2000, but fell to 5th, 6th and eventually 9th in the succeeding surveys, the results showed.

The Ombudsman—the lead government agency in fighting graft—never topped the list, the results also showed.

The Ombudsman was ranked 6th in 2000, and has been on the 7th slot since 2001.

Top 3 performers

In a separate survey conducted by the Makati Business Club from Jan. 6 to 8 this year, the BSP, the DTI and Department of Social Welfare and Development emerged as the top 3 best performing agencies.

In the MBC Executive Outlook Survey, the Department of Foreign Affairs was ranked 4th, while the Department of Agriculture and Department of Budget and Management were tied for the 5th place.

The DBM ranked only 17th in the 2004 survey, a comparative report of the surveys showed.

Top 10

Completing the top 10 best performers were the SEC (6th), Department of Finance (7th), DOH (8th), Supreme Court (9th) and the National Economic and Development Authority, which ranked 10th.

The Department of Tourism fell to 15th slot from 4th. The Armed Forces fell to 19th from 14th slot last year, while the Department of Environment and Natural Resources slid from rank 23 to 28th.

Showing improved performance were the Department of Interior and Local Government, Philippine National Police, appeals and lower courts and Traffic Management.

At the bottom

Maintaining their positions in the bottom of the MBC list of least performing agencies were the Bureau of Customs, Department of Agrarian Reform, Commission on Elections, Department of Public Works and Highways, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

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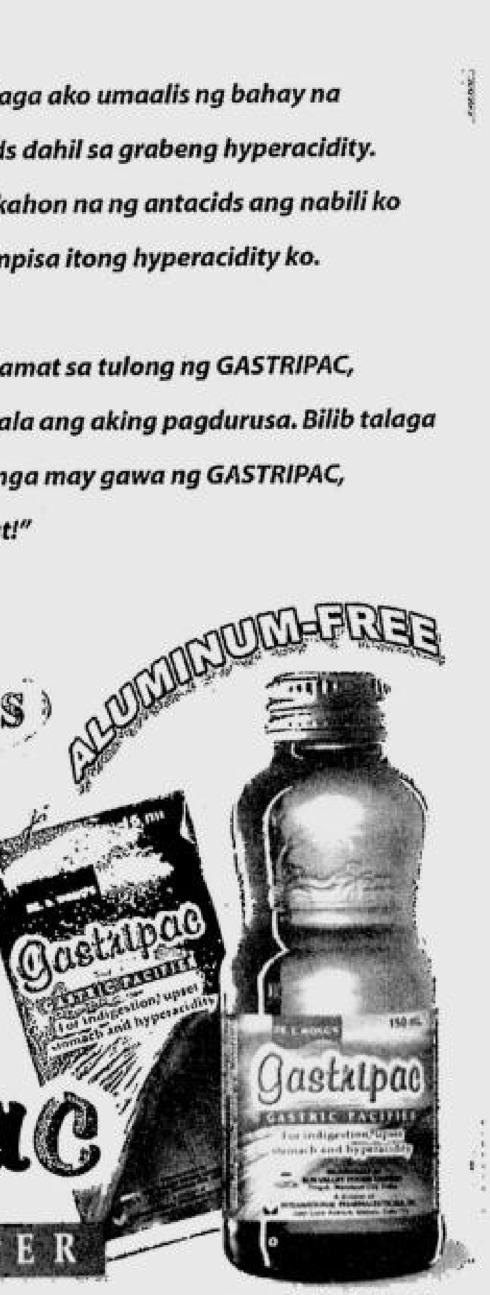

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Ferry service banned in Pasig City

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. *in Pasig City*
and Carla P. Gomez,
PDI Visayas Bureau

THE TRAGEDY did only claim the lives of two brothers who tried saving passengers of a sinking boat.

It has also threatened a practice that dates back to the 1940s.

Barangay officials have banned boats from crossing the Pasig River from Barangay Pineda in Pasig City to Makati City after the only boat ferrying passengers across the river to Makati capsized four days ago.

Brothers Richard and Ralgie Serantes jumped into the river to save the passengers. More than 36 hours after they dove into the waters, divers found their lifeless bodies.

"*Bawal nang tumawid* (Crossing the river from here by boat is now forbidden)," barangay volunteer Brenda Sta. Ana, 36, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Cheap alternative

Many students and workers from Pasig City use the boat service daily to go to Makati, which is just across the river, because it is a cheaper route. Commuting by land would cost them more than the P5 per ride they pay for the ferry service.

The travel time would also be much longer because they would still have to pass through traffic-clogged Edsa.

Pre-War route

Barangay chair Jaime De Leon said the boat service in Purok 3 had been widely used by commuters since the 1940s. At that time, paddles were used to steer the boats.

The service has become a convenient alternative, even to non-Pasig residents, since any resident could easily guide passengers to the boat's terminal called *tawiran*.

Two years ago, ferry operator Emelita San Diego bought a new motorized boat, the one which tilted on Tuesday night, De Leon said.

Though several boats also ferry passengers to other points of the river, San Diego's boat was the only vessel that ferried passengers from Barangay Pineda to Makati.

Confiscated

Her boat was confiscated by barangay officials after the tragedy.

Residents now tell prospective passengers: "*Sarado na ang tawiran* (The boat terminal has closed down)."

De Leon earlier told the INQUIRER the barangay had been planning to take over the operations of the boat service in their area.

The barangay owns a motorized boat bigger than the one that capsized.

But even that plan would have to be shelved in the meantime.

There are two bodies to be buried, but the Serantes family does not know where to get the funds for the burial services of Richard, 29, and Ralgie, 22.

No resources

For lack of resources, the family chose to hold the wake in front of their house.

Instead of bringing the victims to Negros Occidental, their home province, the family decided to bury the brothers at the Pasig public cemetery according to their uncle, Randy Nicoyco.

The funeral is scheduled on Thursday. Meanwhile, the family eagerly awaits the arrival of the victims' mother, Gloria, 53.

Her sons may be heroes, but for Gloria, a native of Barangay Marina, Binalbagan, Negros Occidental, the pain of losing her sons cuts like a knife.

Ma's anguish

"Losing my boys feels like my wings have been cut off," a weeping Gloria told the INQUIRER from her house in Binalbagan.

The brothers were in their shanty at Barangay Pineda, Pasig City, when they heard screams, Gloria was told.

Ralgie ran out and jumped into the water in an attempt to save two passengers.

His brother Richard, who jumped in too, might have suffered from cramps, and Ralgie could have swam to save him, but they both disappeared into the waters, she said.

"My sons were good swimmers. They used to swim in the river near our home. I don't know why they did not make it. Maybe they both developed cramps," she said.

Gloria said Richard, who worked as a taxi driver, had lived in Manila for six years, while Ralgie had been working as a construction worker.

Good sons

"They were very good sons and never got into trouble... they sent us money every month without fail to put their younger siblings to school," Gloria said.

Barangay officials also said the Serantes boys were known in their village for being responsible and kind-hearted neighbors.

Gloria and her husband, Federico Sr., a sugarcane farm worker, have seven children. Two of their daughters–Cherly, 27, and Cherry, 26–are married, but Rudy, 18, Charie, 14, and Federico Jr., 12, still live with their parents.

She said her two Manila-based sons would send money for the schooling of Charie and Federico Jr. because her husband does not earn much.

Bad news

Gloria said she only learned about the fate of her sons on Wednesday morning when a nephew, Edgar Evangelio, came to her house to tell her that he had seen her daughter, Cherry, on television talking about the boat tragedy.

Distraught, Gloria said she called her daughter who did not want to tell her what had happened at first because of her heart problem and fainting spells.

She had insisted on Cherry telling her what really happened to her two sons, and fainted soon after, she recalled.

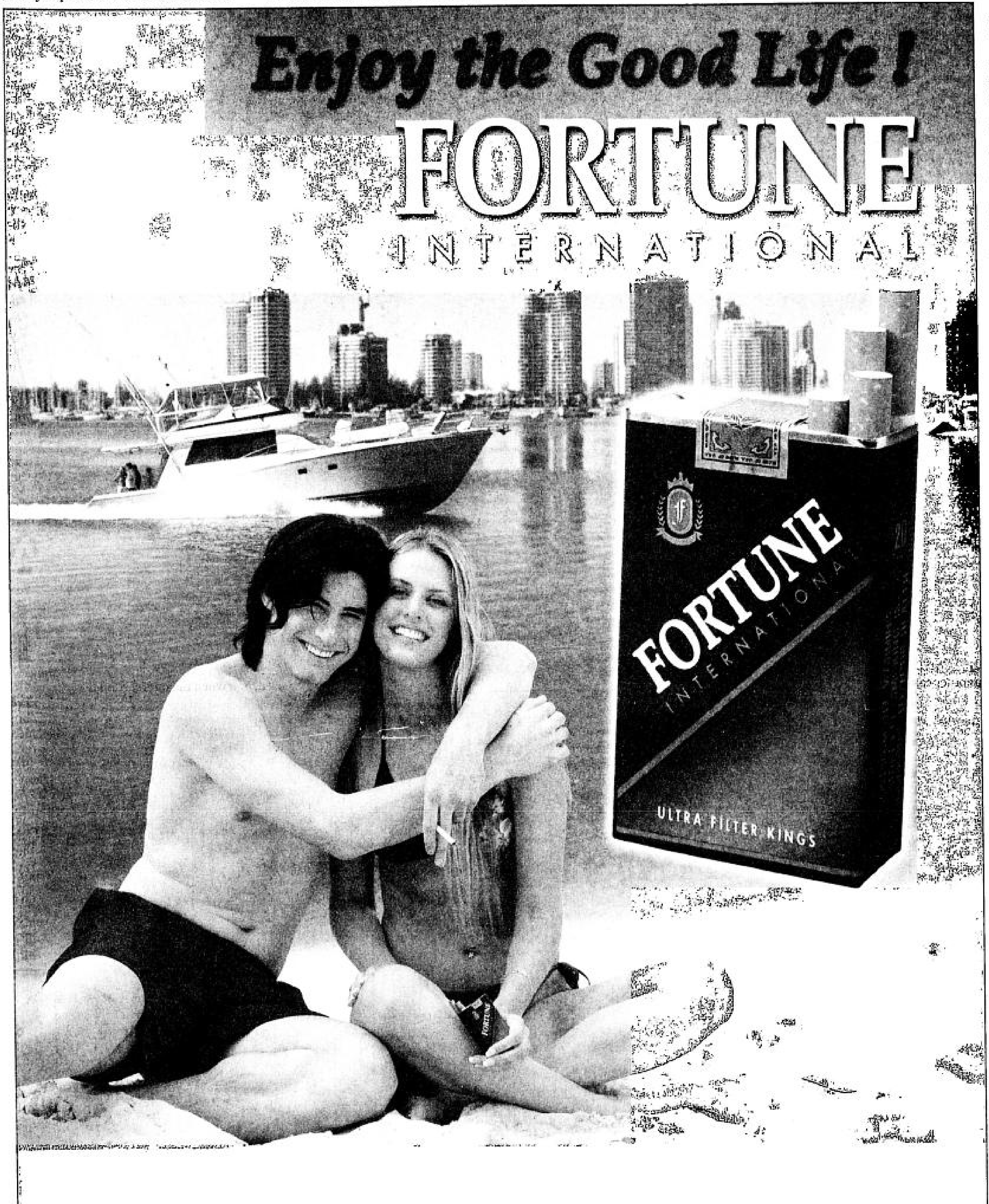
"No wonder I could not sleep the night before. That was when they drowned," Gloria said.

In the days that followed and as the search for her sons went on, she said she was down on her knees, praying fervently that her sons would turn up alive.

But three days after they disappeared, their decomposing bodies were found. Gloria said she was told that her sons would have to be buried in Manila because it would be difficult to ship their bodies home.

Yesterday, accompanied by Marina Barangay Captain Teresa Tolentino and two other village officials, Gloria went to Gov. Joseph Marañon to ask for help so she could to go Manila to attend her sons' burial.

With help from their barangay, Marañon, Binalbagan Mayor Emmanuel Aranda and the Provincial Social Welfare Office, they had been able to raise the money to send Gloria, her children and aunts to Manila for the funeral, according to Tolentino.



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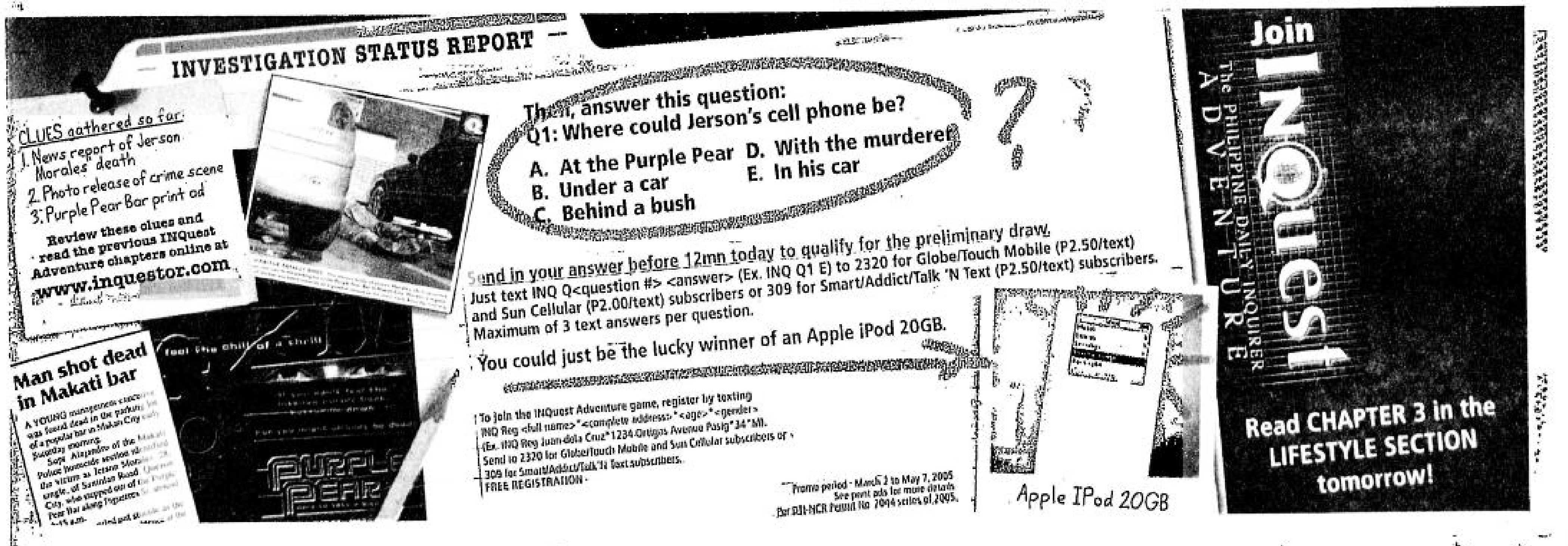
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U-turn slots up in MMDA, Makati talks

By Tarra V. Quismundo

AIMING to once again make use of U-turn slots at the C5-Kalayaan intersection, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) is pushing for talks on the issue with the Makati city government, the agency's officials said yesterday.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said yesterday they were set to hold more talks with local officials to discuss the traffic situation on the C5-Kalayaan intersection.

The MMDA had carved U-turn slots on the major thoroughfare and closed the intersection in October last year to speed up the traffic flow. Believing otherwise, the city government reopened the intersection on Feb. 3, saying that the scheme had slowed down traffic on the national road instead.

An MMDA survey showed that travel time along a 3.1-kilometer portion of C5 Road increased by an average of 9 percent northbound and 47 percent southbound after the Makati city government reopened the C5-Kalayaan intersection and barricaded MMDA U-turn slots.

The travel time survey took note of traffic on the avenue's portion from Lanuza Street in Pasig City to the Market! Market! shopping mall in Taguig, between Feb. 25 to 26. The C5-Kalayaan intersection is between these two areas. The study also indicated that travel speed—how fast vehicles ran along the said portion—decreased by 6 percent northbound and 16 percent southbound.

Makati's own traffic monitoring, meanwhile, showed that traffic on the northbound and southbound lanes of C5 Road within the Makati city limits ranged between light to moderate even during morning and afternoon peak hours, said Joey Salgado, Makati Information and Community Relations department head.

"Traffic improved even during rush hours [when the intersection was opened], so we still maintain the status quo," Salgado said.

But to prove their point, MMDA Deputy Chair Cesar Lacuna said it would show Makati officials a traffic simulation on the intersection to compare the traffic when the U-turn slots are used and the intersection was closed, and when the intersection is open.

Charges fabricated, says Roldan lawyer

By Alcuin Papa

THE LAWYER of actor and former congressman Dennis Roldan accused police and other officials of planning to fabricate more evidence against his client to implicate him in more car theft cases.

Roldan, whose real name is Mitchell Yap Gumabao, had been detained by police for the alleged kidnapping of a three-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy.

In a talk with reporters after yesterday's hearing, defense counsel Salvador Panelo said he received information that Director Robert Delfin, chief of the Police Anti Crime and Emergency Response team, would fabricate more evidence against his client.

Panelo said "someone has told me they would fabricate more charges against my client for car theft activities," but declined to name his source. He said, however, that Delfin and other officials would use two former cohorts of Roldan who had turned state witness, Alberto Pagdanganan and Octavio Garces, to execute affidavits implicating his client in other car theft activities.

Meanwhile, one more suspect, Adrian C. Domingo, yesterday admitted taking part in the crime, bringing to three the number of suspects who owned had up to the abduction.

With Armand Nocum

Tan's trial postponed

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE TRIAL of the P25-billion tax evasion case against tobacco and beer tycoon Lucio Tan that should have finally started yesterday was postponed to next month.

And just like before, prosecution and defense blamed each other for the delay. The prosecution said it was ready for trial of the cases that started more than a decade ago. But the defense objected, saying the questions they raised should be resolved first. After about 90 minutes of debates, the trial was postponed.

Yesterday, the defense said the nine cases against Tan, reputedly the country's richest man, must be resolved in nine different trials.

To "accommodate the prosecution," the defense asked the prosecution to file a motion to consolidate the trials. The prosecution, however, maintained Marikina City Metropolitan Trial Court Judge Alex Ruiz had ruled that the nine cases would be tried jointly.

Defense lawyer Estelito Mendoza, however, said Ruiz's order applied only to the pre-trial stage and not the actual trial.

He explained that evidence for one case might not necessarily be the same for another case.

VCD TURNOVER
Optical Media Board Chair Edu Manzano, Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, and National Capital Region Police Office Chief Gen. Avelino Razon walk on top of thousands of pirated VCDs and DVDs turned over by Quiapo vendors at Manila's Liwasang Bonifacio to boost the government's anti-piracy drive. ERIK ARAZAS

MNLF integrees could be fighting government troops

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

I AM not in the habit of saying "I told you so," but let me say this again anyway: the government made a mistake in assigning former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) rebels to Sulu. They would become the Trojan horse of government troops if fighting erupted again between the government and MNLF rebels, I said before in this column.

It seems I was right.

My source in the battlefield said that Lt. Col. Dennis Villanueva, the highest-ranking fatality in the new skirmishes in Sulu, was killed not by the enemy but by "friendly fire."

The friendly fire allegedly came from former MNLF rebels who had been integrated into the Armed Forces.

In the thick of the fight with MNLF rebels, the source said, some MNLF integrees got hold of a mortar and turned it on their own comrades on the government side.

In short, Villanueva was killed by his own men.

The MNLF integrees escaped later.

The Armed Forces high command made a big mistake by deploying former MNLF rebels to Sulu.

I said in previous columns that if fighting again erupted between government troops and the MNLF, the MNLF integrees would side with their former comrades. They would have no choice because they would be fighting their relatives (Moros have extended family ties) and fellow Muslims.

I had recommended in this space that former MNLF rebels be deployed in areas where their loyalty to the government would be tested. They would be more effective in, say, Luzon to fight the New People's Army.

In 1973, the defunct Philippine Constabulary recruited Maranaws into the service. These Muslims from Lanao were assigned to their home province. During the attack on Marawi City by MNLF rebels, all the Maranaw recruits defected to the rebels.

How could the government be so stupid as to commit the same mistake again?

In warfare, it's not practical for armies to recruit to their ranks soldiers who would fight their own people. That's basic.

During World War II, Japanese-Americans (called Niseis) were recruited into the US armed forces. But they were not deployed to the Pacific where they would be fighting Japanese soldiers.

The Niseis did very well in Europe where they fought the Germans. They were not made to fight their own kind.

I told Gen. Efren Abu, AFP chief, over dinner about my misgivings in the deployment of former MNLF rebels in their own territory. Apparently, he thought that since I was not a military man, much more a strategist, why should he listen to me?

I am not saying that all former MNLF rebels now in the AFP are traitors. I'm just saying that their loyalty should now be put to the test.

Now, the AFP is paying a high price for its stupidity.

* * *

Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes deserves commendation for directing the Philippine National Police Academy to include a complete course on human rights in its curriculum.

In my TV program, "Isumbong mo kay Tulfo," police abuses and human rights violations constitute one of the most common complaints ordinary citizens bring to us.

Hopefully, the inclusion of such a course in the PNPA curriculum would lead to a higher respect for the rights of citizens among future PNP officers. This should also bring about a much better image for the police organization.

10 hurt in Malabon eviction

By Nancy C. Carvajal

CLOSE to 4,000 angry residents living along Letre Road, Tonsuya, Malabon, faced a determined demolition crew yesterday morning after a court denied petitions filed by the local government to postpone the proceedings until the issue of resettlement is solved.

Armed with a court order, the crew started tearing down houses located beside the walls of the Lady of Lourdes Eternal Park belonging to members of Kapisanang Diwa ng Maralita, Damayang Maralita and Lakas'ng Maralita ng Tonsuya, direct beneficiaries of peace talks provisions between the government and the RPA-ABB, a New People's Army breakaway group. The residents had put up their homes on a 5.8-hectare property belonging to Francisco Gozon. Ten persons were hurt during the incident, according to a city health officer.

INQuest police briefing at Glorietta this weekend

AS part of the recently launched INQuest Adventure—the newest & biggest multi-level media mystery game by the Philippine Daily Inquirer—a police briefing will be held at the Glorietta 4 cinema lobby this Saturday and Sunday, March 12 and 13, at 2, 4 and 7 p.m. The event is part of the game, where INQuestors may learn more clues and come closer to solving the mystery.

Aside from the police briefing, an INQuest booth will also be stationed nearby for visitors who need help registering for the game.

INQuest Adventure—a game that will use print & broadcast media, mobile SMS and online websites as it progresses—is the Inquirer's most ambitious marketing initiative to date. To join, just text INQ REG <full name>*<address>*<age>*<gender> (ex. INQ Reg Juan dela Cruz*1234 Ortigas Ave Pasig*34*M) to 2320 for Globe/Touch Mobile subscribers or 309 for Smart/Addict/Talk N' Text subscribers. Upon registration, the mobile phone number used will be automatically locked to the INQuestor's name.

Once registered, INQuestors may follow the INQuest Mystery novel found in various sections of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and guess the answers to the questions at the end of each story part. Clues to the answer may be found within the pages of the Inquirer, on the INQuest website or on INQTV (every Thursdays, 8 to 9 pm at ABC 5).

For questions, INQuestors may text INQ Help <your question> and send to 2320 for Globe/Touch Mobile subscribers or 309 for Smart/Addict/Talk N' Text subscribers, or log-on to www.inquestor.com and use their mobile number as pass code.

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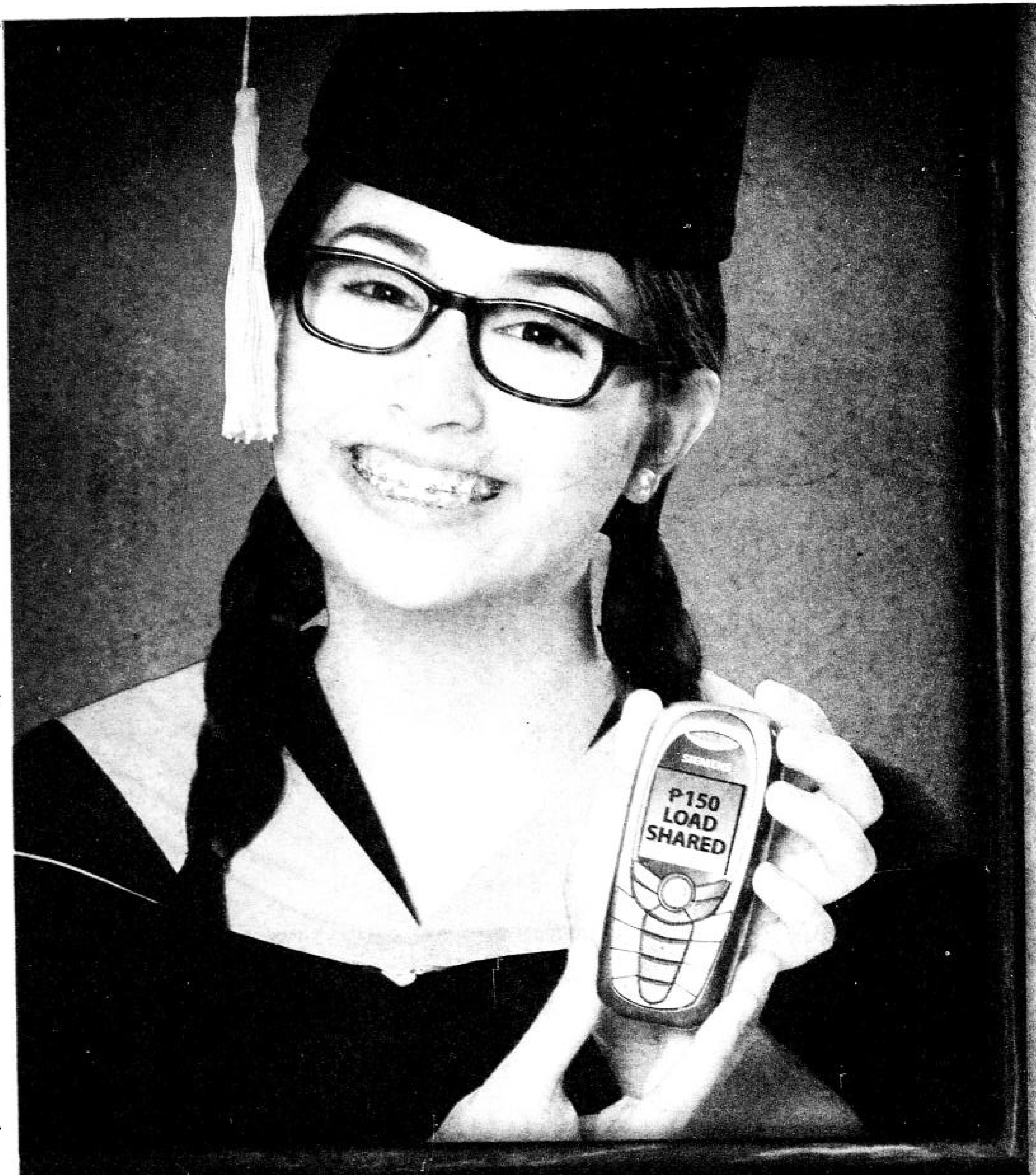

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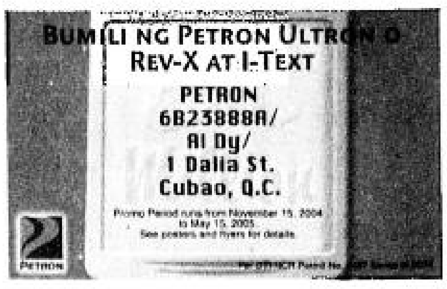
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Pacquiao too strong, swear awed sparmates

By Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES—Trainer Freddie Roach said Manny Pacquiao's newly minted right hook, labeled as Manila Ice, will knock out Erik Morales but Pacquiao's sparmates yesterday disagreed and swore the blazing left hand will do the job.

"If Manny hits him with that big left, it's gonna be over," testified Jose Sta. Cruz, a rangy, undefeated (18-0) lightweight who got banged by Pacquiao for three furious rounds before a second sparmate was called in yesterday.

Sta. Cruz, who had tagged Pacquiao with jarring head shots in a previous sparring, said the RP boxing hero has a tremendous chance of winning.

"He's in great shape really, he has great power, speed, everything," Sta. Cruz said after Pacquiao flashed his full worth yesterday.

Sta. Cruz, as tall as Morales, fights at 135 pounds but weighed 142 pounds for yesterday's sparring against Pacquiao who checked in at 129.

"He just keeps getting stronger, he keeps on improving," said Sugar Ray Beltran, the second Pacquiao sparmate.

"Oh man, he's a stronger puncher, a terrific left, better than ever, I'm gonna put my money on him," Beltran added.

Yesterday's speed and power demonstration by Pacquiao was a big leap from his sluggish session before the Mexican media on Tuesday when he obviously pulled his punches.

After the well-applauded sparring, Roach said Pacquiao is ready to go for a knockout.

Roach said he would appreciate it if Morales comes in at over 140 pounds for the fight, because that would make the Mexican easier to catch.

Pacquiao said he would win but refused to state whether it would be by points or stoppage.

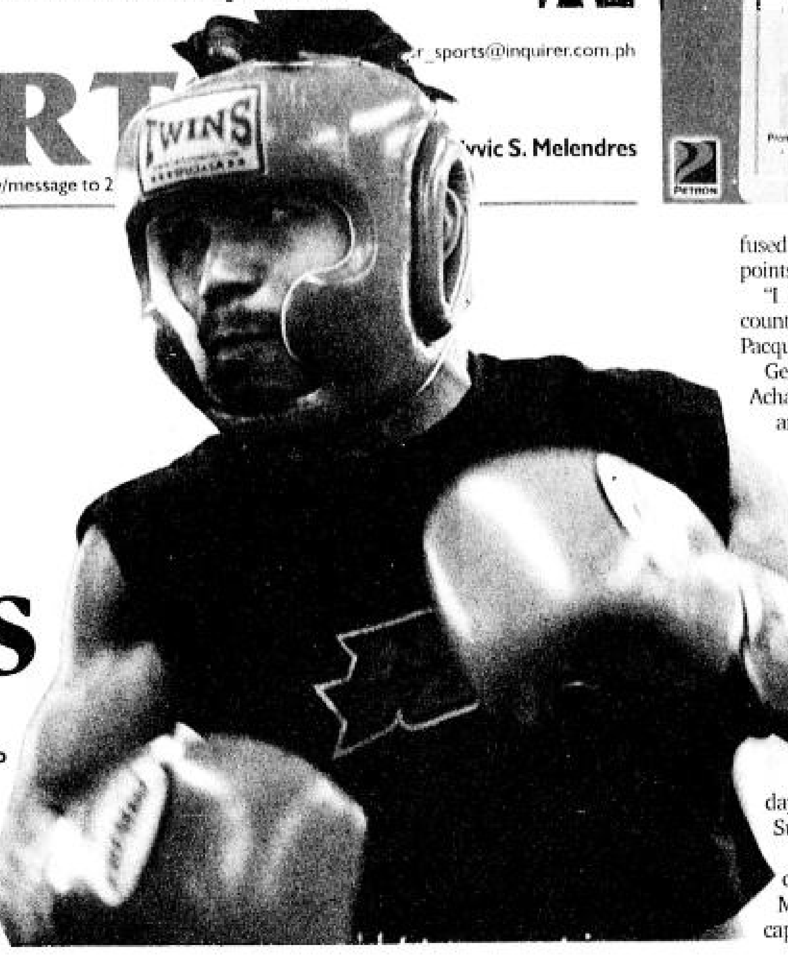
"I have to do my very best for my countrymen who are all praying for me," Pacquiao told a television reporter.

General Santos City mayor Pedro Acharon witnessed yesterday's workout and expressed confidence that Pacquiao would win by knockout.

Many other Pacquiao backers, led by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, are expected at ringside in Las Vegas for the March 19 showdown.

Pacquiao's wife, Jinkee, is expected to join the world boxing celebrity Sunday at his new quarters at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Vine Street.

Pacquiao drives to Las Vegas in a convoy on Monday, the same day Morales is expected in the gambling capital.



MANNY Pacquiao moves in on his sparmate Wednesday at the Wild Card Gym in Hollywood, Los Angeles. AP

Pacquiao can't win on points?

LOS ANGELES—If Erik Morales finishes the war against Manny Pacquiao on his feet, there would be a very slim chance for Filipinos to celebrate.

Take this from Rod Nazario, Pacquiao's business manager, who last year swore he would never let his feared fighter see action in Las Vegas again.

"Our only clear chance for victory is via a knockout," Nazario said after Pacquiao finished sparring at the Wild Card Gym here yesterday.

Nazario was obviously in dread of the perceived machinations of promoter Bob Arum, whose invisible clout in the Las Vegas boxing circuit is no secret.

Pacquiao, after knocking down double world champ Juan Manuel Marquez, an Arum boy, had to settle for a draw after the faulty scoring, which deprived Pacquiao of a winning point, was upheld.

Of course, other than the possible specter of cheating, a bigger odd Pacquiao has to contend with is Morales' edge in skill and experience.

The taller Mexican warrior, a gutsy in-fighter, is a master boxer who could control a fierce foe the way a good matador would handle a raging bull.

He has belittled Pacquiao as a one-dimensional fighter who cannot move.

If Pacquiao fails to find his range and does not succeed in landing his punches, he could end up taking a boxing lesson from Morales, a former three-time world champion. *Recah Trinidad*

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GMA releases P300M for SEAG

By Jasmine W. Payo

BESET by money woes right from the start, the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee finally found a financial savior.

Malacañang approved yesterday the release of P300 million to the SEA Games coffers even as Philsoc continued to scrounge for funds to meet the projected P800 million to P1 billion budget for the nine-day biennial meet starting Nov. 27.

"Upon instruction of the President (Macapagal-Arroyo), Philsoc will receive the fund for the operational requirements," said Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, Philsoc vice chair and Philippine Olympic Committee president.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima, who represented Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin, announced the fund release in a meeting yesterday with Cojuangco, Philippine Sports Commission officer-in-charge Butch Ramirez, POC vice chair Monico Puentevella and Pagcor head Ephraim Genuino.

Curiously, Philsoc chair Obet Pagdanganan was not present during the meeting. The INQUIRER could not reach Pagdanganan for comment, but a staff member said the Philsoc chief was not aware of any meeting.

The P300-million budget, so far the biggest amount Philsoc has received, will be made available during the official marketing launch of the Games Tuesday at the Golden Gate Restaurant on Roxas Boulevard.

Except for Globe Telecoms' P100-million Gold Package, Philsoc has not finalized any other major sponsorship deals.

Express slip past Barako

By June Navarro

PLAYING for the first time with his new team, Gary David felt right at home with the FedEx Express.

GAME TODAY
(Leyte NHS Gym, Tacloban City)
6:15 p.m.—Alaska vs Brgy. Ginebra

GAMES TOMORROW
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:15 p.m.—SMB vs Red Bull Barako
6:35 p.m.—Sta. Lucia Realty vs Talk N Text

David knocked in a decisive three-pointer with 32 seconds left as the Express slipped past the Red Bull Barako, 109-104, last night in the 2005 Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

The triple capped a seven-point run that gave the Express the lead to stay, 107-103.

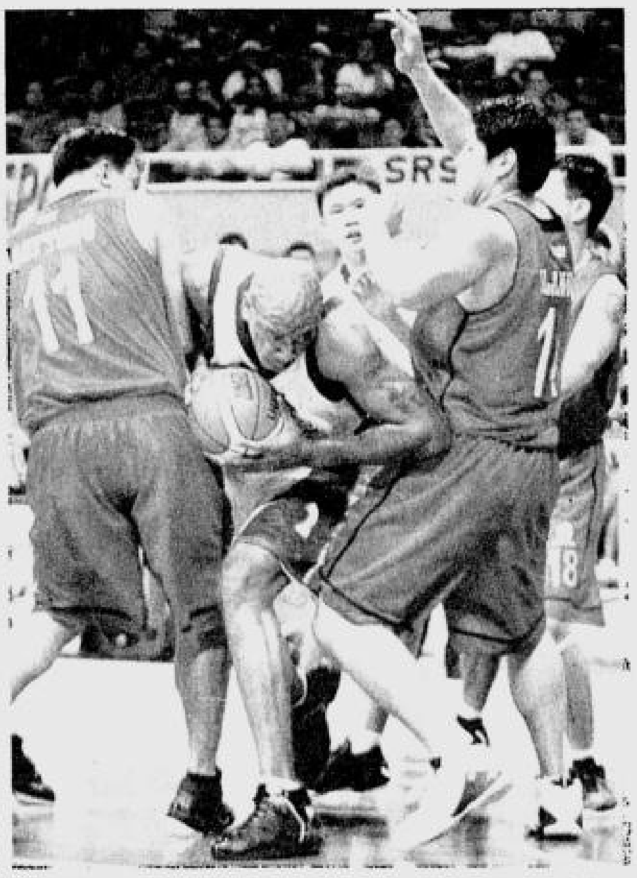
"It was only my first game but I'm already comfortable playing for FedEx," said David, who scored 14 of his 18 points in the second half to lead the Express to their first win after an opening-day setback to Purefoods.

The Barako ran into a maze of errors in the closing minute and missed six of their last seven shots in the last 48 seconds.

"Had David played in the first game, we could have won over Purefoods," said newly hired FedEx coach Bong Ramos after securing his first victory as a PBA head coach.

Shell leaned on the two-pronged attack of import Wesley Wilson and Chris Calaguio to dump Purefoods, 80-68, in the second game.

David was shipped by the Coca-Cola Tigers to the Express in exchange for playmaker Dale Singson during the off-season, but it was only on Thursday that the three-way trade, that included San Miguel Beer, was completed.


FEDEX import Anthony Miller tries to force his way past a phalanx of Red Bull defenders during their game last night. RYAN LIM

The scores:

First Game

FEDEX 109—Ritualo 25, Miller 24, David 18, Billones 16, De Ocampo 10, Gonzales 7, Pingris 4, Arboleda 4, Ferriols 1.

RED BULL 104—Johnson 25, Ejercito 17, Meneses 17, Asaytono 13, Robinson 10, Villanueva 7, Tugade 6, Valenzuela 4, Ybanez 3, Baguio 2, Bernardo 0, Torion 0.

Quarters: 32-26, 52-47, 74-78, 109-104.

Second Game

SHELL 90—Wilson 24, Calaguio 19, Dela Cruz 10, Yap 8, Mamaril 7, Tubid 6, Alvarez 4, Cruz 3, Sotto 0, Jackson 0.

PUREFOODS 68—Smith 17, Raymundo 14, Castillo 10, Artadi 8, Yap 8, Simon 6, Laure 3, Evangelista 2, Espinosa 0, Hrabak 0, Limpot 0.

Quarters: 21-7, 31-29, 56-41, 80-68.

Terrific Trio

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

NOW I know why Sta. Elena has been consistently voted Club of the Year. That award is given yearly to a golf club that prides itself with quality, from the club's doorstep to the club's lockers. This is not to mention its layout, which should be world-class anytime, from its first tee box to its last green.

The fairways—oh, boy, if you know Augusta, then you know what I mean.

Suddenly, I've noticed all that at Sta. Elena when I played in the 6th Jaguar Golf Invitational on Thursday, March 10.

And more.

Try the golfer's massage at the locker and you might start rethinking your ideas about some of the spas in the metropolis.

But Sta. Elena, a course I haven't played for quite some time, was really like that from the very start: pristine beauty all over. Why only now that I've discovered its latent charm—and lovely amenities—I have only myself to blame.

Maybe I've been away that long, strayed into other courses and in the process lost my sense of aestheticism, that I've forgotten Sta. Elena's inherent loveliness altogether?

To Venus, the goddess of beauty, I implore forgiveness.

But wasn't it only a while back, when Sta. Elena had opened its doors, and I was one among the few invited to sample it?

Where's that cigar-chomping Belgian again—or was he Danish?—who started the beautiful landscape at Sta. Elena? Why, Sta. Elena is abloom all year round, with its flowers exploding in majestic colors as if imploring to the skies: "God, we are here for your flock to enjoy Mother Nature's beauty!"

Yes, to Eros, the goddess of love, I implore mercy.

How can I not do that? I'll do everything if only to restore my standing as a CPA-certified public adorer of Sta. Elena right from the very start.

Oh, well, I couldn't thank Wellington "Willy" C. Soong, chair and president of Jaguar Philippines Inc., enough. His invite gave me the rare chance to play Sta. Elena again, a course that has given me pleasant memories, including a victory I had scored there in one of the Kamayan golf tournaments that the late Tito Eduque had hosted when he was still around.

Someone asked me a question right after I had stepped into the clubhouse from the lockers on Thursday.

"How was your game?"

And I answered: "Next question, please?"

That's not an original. But I cite it here again, if only to emphasize a point: This day at Sta. Elena, as in many days of my golfing life, the game is but secondary. The primary thing is, as always, I enjoy the game—plus delight in the sight and sound of a golf course.

Not that I have lost my appetite to play well. Never. I do intend to play well with each round. But intending and achieving are two different things.

I intend to always play well but the trouble is, I end up not achieving my intention to keep my scores down low.

I am now resigned to the fact that if I played well in a particular round, God had a hand in it. If I played bad, blame it on me.

I have resolved a long time ago that, yes, golf is not to be really played but instead, it's only to be enjoyed.

But at Sta. Elena, it's not only the course that makes your game really worth the while.

The food there, wow, it can put to shame even some of the best cuisine in our so-called five-star hotels in Manila.

"Do you know that by just being here four days monitoring the Jaguar tournament, I have gained six pounds already?" said Willy. "No other golf club in town can surpass, even equal, the kind of food they serve here."

But from my buddy Jong Arcano, here's the best part of it: The best-kept secret at Sta. Elena that truly makes Sta. Elena a class act is, over there, they run and organize tournaments for you free of any charge.

To Junie Ledesma, Bones Floro and King Stehmeier, Sta. Elena's Terrific Trio, here's a glass. You are really setting a trend on how to run a golf club.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Saturday, March 12, 2005

SINO ANG BABANGGA SA GINEBRA?
PBA
ABC Iba tayo
2005 PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE
ASTIG!
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Entertainment Konek				Y Speak		Nonilia The Hidden Files		Star Dance			TV Patrol World	Magandang Gabi Bayan		Star Cinema Presents				Kontrobersyal
NBN	Value Vision		Value Vision			GSIS Member's Hour		Yan Ang Pinoy		Gold & Glory In Grace		Search For The 1st Tanduay Billiards Player		To Be Announced			Business & Leisure		
ABC 5	Smart TV	The Basketball Show		Soccer Showdown		Loren		Diretsahan		Viva Box Office				Sing Galing		Maverick & Ariel	ABC Cinema		
GMA 7	Startalk			Wish Ko Lang		Wag Kukurap	Pinoy Pop Superstar	Bitoy's Funniest Videos			Extra Challenge		Imbestigador		Idol Ko Si Kap			Tales Of Horror	
RPN 9			Biyaheng Langit	JR News	Kids TV	Hanapbuhay Overseas		Isumbong mo kay Tulfo		7 Days		JAG		2002 Laureus Sports Award				Money Talks	
IBC 13		Home Shopping Network		Entrepinoy	Good Take	Home Shopping Network		Legacy Of Hero		Mesconi Cup				Biag		In This Corner		Ugnayang Pambansa	
Solar	Tough Enough	WWE Bottomline		Wwe Raw				Wwe Heat		Wow		Slamball		UFC Recall				Thunder Box	
Nickelodeon	Girls In Love	Kenan & Kel	1, 2, 3	Snack Unfabulous (New) All Grown Up My Dad The Rock Star Drake & Josh				Danny Phantom	My Life As A Teenage Robot	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	Sabrina, The Teenage Witch	Romeo	Girls In Love	Kenan & Kel	As Told By Ginger	Rocket Power	Hey Arnold!	The Wild Thornberrys
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Presents		Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Club MYX	Take 5	OPM MYX		MYX Live!	
ETC		Dateline		The Today Show		Saturday Night Live		NBC Nightly News	Entertainment Tonight	One Tree Hill		Queer Eye For A Straight Guy		Saturday Night Live		Tonight Show With Jay Leno		Elimidate	Change of Heart
Cinema One	Noon At Ngayon				The Phone				My Movie				$3. Where D' Girls Are (Premiere)				Singles		
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Sports TV	Mr Bean	7th Heaven	Gilmore Girls (7:45PM)		The Bachelor (8:40PM)		Studio 23 Present				Reel Deal
AXN		My Best Friend's Wedding				Global Adventure		WRC 2005: Rally X5	Rated X	Enervon AXN Xtreme		Ripley's Believe It Or Not		When Animals Attack		Invincible			
Star World	Action Man	Totally Outrageous Behavior Caught On Tape	Weird TV	Miami Vice		Adventure Inc.		Roswell		Dark Angel		TNA Wrestling/One Night Only! Rod Stewart In Concert		When Cars Attack		Dog The Bounty Hunter	Cops	The Kumars At No. 42	Goodness Gracious Me
CNN	Diplomatic License	World News	World Business This Week	World News	People In The News	Larry King Live		World News	World Sport			World News		World News	Talk Asia	World News	The Daily Show With John Stewart: Global Ed	World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Big Bite Nite		The Story Of Raynard The Fox		Baby-Faced Assassins		Creature Feature		Bug Attack		Be The Creature		The Snake Wranglers	Wildlife Diary	Big Bite Nite		Secret World Of Bats	
Solar Sports		Copenhagen Masters: Gade vs. Hidayat		ATP Dubai Tennis C'ship 05 SemiFinal	Sounds of the Finals			NBA TV Daily	NBA Inside Stuff	Sports Desk	Boxing Pacquiao-Barrera B2B Morales-Barrera				NBA Game Chicago @ Seattle				
Lifestyle Network	Carol Duvall	HGTV Special		Radical Sabbatical	Road & Track	Genuine Article	Food Fight	Date Plate	Email Live		Nigella Bites	Brini Maxwell Show	Royalty A-Z		Modern Girl's Guide	E! True Hollywood Story		Look For Less	
HBO	Flipper			Last Man Standing (4:05 PM)			Fancy Dancing (5:45PM)			Trapped (7:15 PM)				Intolerable Cruelty			Six Feet Under 36: Everyone Leaves		Dead Calm
Star Movies		Alien				Nicholas Nickleby				Sweet Home Alabama				The Mummy				The Terminator (11:05PM)	
Cartoon Network		The Detective Squad	Tom & Jerry Show	Swat Kats	Duck Dodgers	Xiaolin Showdown	Winx Club	Atomic Betty	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Robin Hoodnik		Looney Tunes Show	Cartoon Cartoon Show	Power Rangers Ninja Storm	Duck Dodgers	Time Squad	Harvey Birdman (11:15PM)	Xiaolin Showdown
ESPN		2005 Big East C'ship New York, NY USA		2005 Big East C'ship New York, NY USA		2005 Big East C'ship New York, NY USA				NBA Game: Mavericks @ Bucks			World Pool Masters '04 Ann Zoa, Holland						
Disney Channel	Potatoes And Dragons	Sabrina, The Animated Series	The Legend Of Tarzan	Wicked Science	Kim Possible	Martin Mystery/ That's So Raven/ Dave The Barbarian/ Phil Of The Future				America's Funniest Home Video	Stuck In The Suburbs			Dave The Barbarian	Mr. Bean	America's Funniest Home Video	That's So Raven	The Lion King II: Simba's Pride	
Cinemax			Billy Madison (3:45 PM)			Whitewash: The Clarence Brandley Story				The Bourne Identity				Lethal Weapon			Hollywood Homicide (10:45PM)		
Hallmark Channel		The Book Of Ruth				Monster Makers				Vinegar Hill				Hans Christian Andersen: The Fairytale Cartoon				See Jane Date (10:50PM)	
Discovery Channel		Human Discovery		Ultimate Cars	Building The Ultimate	Unsolved History				Wild Discovery				Rides		The New Detectives		Extreme Discovery	
MTV Philippines			Carmen & Dave	Whatever Things	Moto Ask Good Charlotte		Globally Dismissed	Room Raiders	Taildaters	One Bad Trip	MTV Urban Beats	Punk'D	MTV Hits					MTV Live in Italy: Groove Armada	MTV Live in Italy: Fadkiss
Sports Plus			Inside the PGA	Arena Football: San Jose @ Orlando						Bikini Destination	You've Got to See This	Acc Basketball: Wake Forest @ Duke				PAL Interclub Golf		The Honda Classic Day2	

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Sapat ba ang paghahanda ni Manny Pacquiao?
MILLION DOLLAR MANNY
Exclusive footage from Los Angeles!
Abangan! March 17, 10:30 p.g.
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Juvic, Jayvie rule DHL tilt

JAYVIE Agojo validates her status.

CANLUBANG—Juvic Pagunsan salvaged a one-under-par 71 yesterday to beat erstwhile leader and club teammate Boyet Saragoza by three strokes and put away the 10th DHL-WWWExpress National Amateur Golf Championship at Cangolf's North course here.

Pagunsan, at the center of a storm following his announcement Monday that he wanted out of the national team, pounced on Saragoza's misadventures on Nos. 13 and 15 to grab the lead for good and secure his second victory in the tournament.

The 26-year-old Canlubang mainstay finished with an eight-under-par 280 total, underscoring his status as the top amateur in the land.

Saragoza, who dropped five strokes in that two-hole disaster, carded a 75 for 283—still good for second place.

Teener Tonlits Asistio struggled to a 76 but held on to clinch third with 288, while Korean Choi Ming-gyu shot 72 for fourth with 289.

Reigning RP Ladies Open champion Jayvie Agojo scored an expected romp in the ladies' side, winning by a seven-stroke margin over former RP Ladies winner Carmelette Villaroman despite a closing 76. Agojo had a 54-hole total of 228.

The victory further validated Agojo's claim as the country's top lady amateur after the 18-year-old shotmaker, an incoming scholar at the Pepperdine University, ruled the Manila Ladies Open and the Southern Ladies Open earlier.

Villaroman scored a 75 and wound up at 235 while Lina de Guzman shot a 76 and placed third at 236, followed by Lora Roberto (79-238), Debbie de Villa (79-238) and Anya Tanpinco (76-238).

Pagunsan, who trailed Saragoza by a stroke after 54 holes, caught up with his teammate with a front-nine 34 only to fall back when Saragoza birdied No. 12.

Then disaster struck Saragoza. He overshot the par-4 13th and three-putted for a double bogey. Although Pagunsan double bogeyed the par-5 15th, Saragoza fared worse with an eight.

Pagunsan picked up a birdie on the 16th for good measure and then coasted home.

Joel Opaco of Del Monte rallied with one of the day's two best scores—a 69—to finish fifth.

Dethroned champion Jun Bernis also carded an even-par 72 and finished tied for sixth at 291 with former national champion Artemio Murakami (76), Gene Bondoc (73), Marvin Dumandan (72) and Buboy Jaraula (70).

NOTES: Due to the limited space for the banner story titled "Juvic key to Razon's fund support," which appeared in yesterday's paper under the byline of reporter Musong R. Castillo, the tagline of sports editor Ted Melendres, who contributed to the story, was inadvertently excluded from the final layout. The omission made it appear that Mr. Castillo interviewed Benny M. Gopez, president of the NGAP, which was not the case. Mr. Gopez was actually interviewed by Mr. Melendres and excerpts of that interview were incorporated into the story. We regret the omission. — *Ed*

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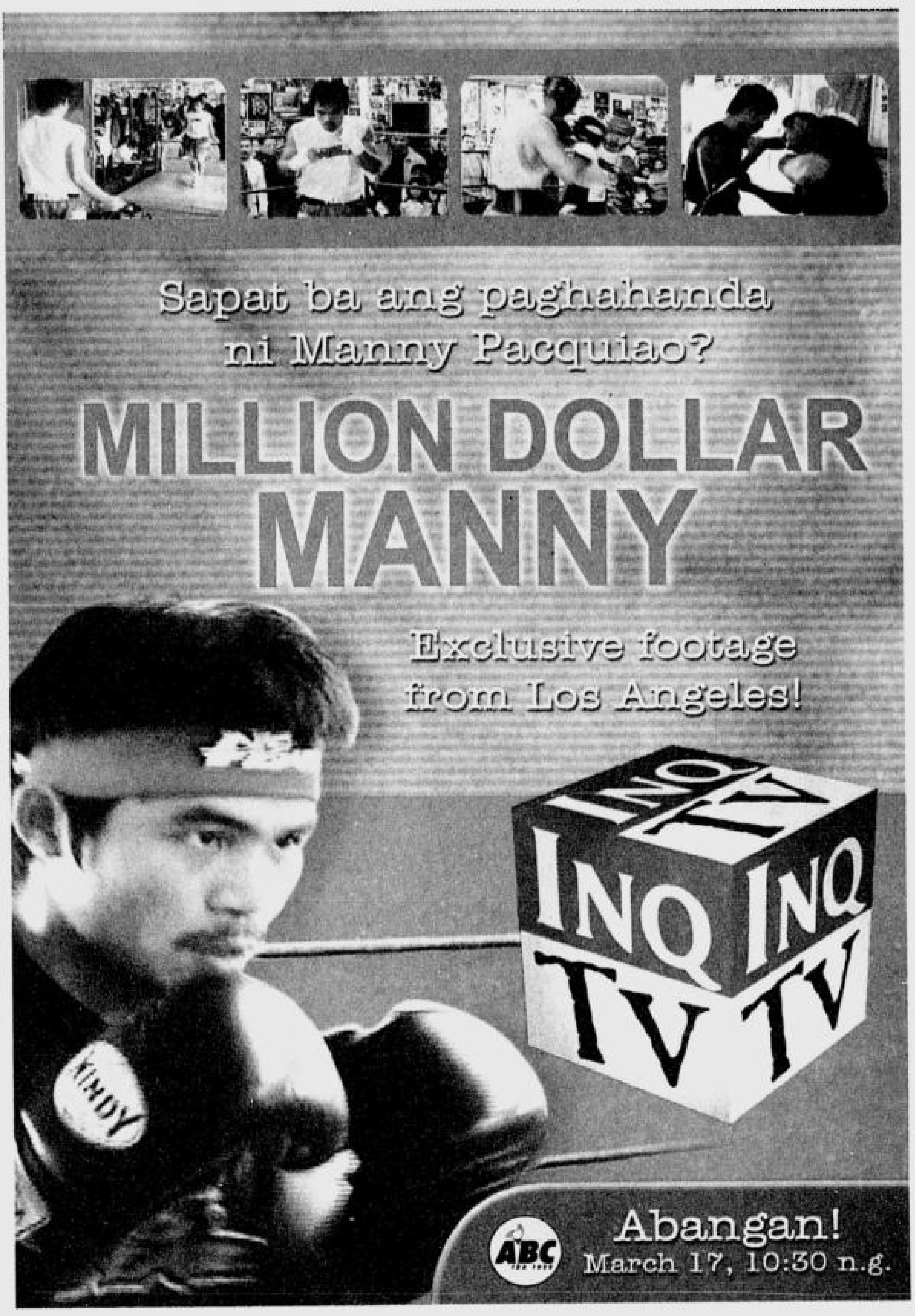
Sapat ba ang paghahanda ni Manny Pacquiao?
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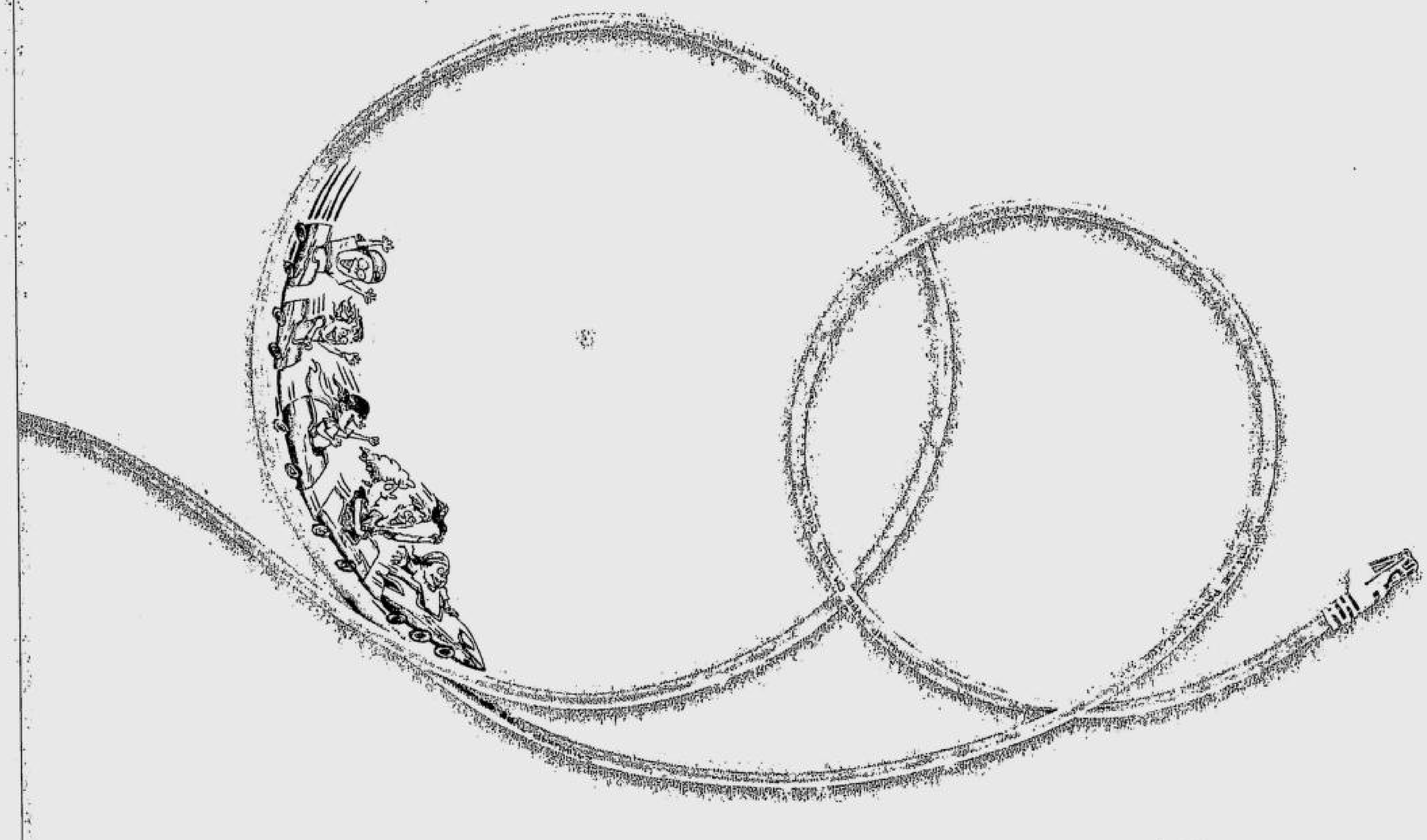
Abangan!
March 17, 10:30 n.g.



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NCR, Negros dispute title

Metro booters whitewash Davao to forge grudge match

INTENSE action typifies the Negros-AFP Laguna semifinal tussle. The Negrenses won, 4-0.

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Reigning titlist National Capital Region made sure there would be a rematch with rival Negros Occidental for the 2005 PFF-adidas National Men's Championship plum by bulldozing Davao, 5-0, Thursday at the Don Gregorio Pelaez Sports Center here.

NCR and Negros, which battled to a 1-1 draw in their group-stage round encounter, are battling at presstime yesterday with Negros Occidental Football Association president Rep. Charlie Cojuangco and NCR Football Association president Poch Borromeo watching from the stands.

Philippine Football Federation president Johnny Romualdez also flew in early in the day in time for the championship match.

"There is beauty in football if we play only by the ball," said NCR-Navy coach Edward Joel Anthony, who requested tournament commissioner Pablito Araneta to provide a referee who could keep the game in control. "When somebody gets hurt, the players will turn highly physical."

Negros Occidental head coach Norman Fegidero believes the match will be evenly fought as both squads enter the pitch with a roster of fit players.

"Both lineups are complete and those with injury have recovered," said Fegidero. "This is going to be a good game."

Navy ace striker Jimmy Doña's header from the penalty box in the 6th minute set the tone for NCR's demolition of their younger Davao counterparts.

It was in the final half, however, that NCR made a picnic out of the match with Doña and Gary Viliran scoring a goal each in the 47th and 79th minutes. Loreto Kalalang completed the romp with back-to-back markers in the 88th and 90th minutes.

Misamis Oriental Gov. Oscar Moreno will join Romualdez and Cagayan de Oro-Misamis Oriental Football Association president Allan Abellanosa in the awarding ceremony of the tournament organized by CMOFA and supported by PFF partners Petron, SuperFerry and Red Ribbon Bakeshop.

Routs mark start of Petron beach volley

REIGNING champions Michelle Laborte and Cecille Tabuena of the Philippine Navy showed up with different partners but the result was still the same—lopsided victories over their hapless rivals to jumpstart their campaign in the first leg of the 2005 Petron Ladies' Beach Volleyball Tournament at the picturesque Clearwater Country Club in Clark Field, Pampanga, yesterday.

Laborte teamed up with Rubie de Leon in a masterful 21-11 shellacking of veterans Joyce Ann Realeza and Joan Namuco, while Tabuena and new partner Erika Tiamzon provided the day's most lopsided win through a 21-9 thumping of the pretty pair of Rosalina Gomez and Roma Jaro.

Their greatest opposition could come from the Philippine Army's Patricia Siatan and Jennifer Bohawe, the meet's first ever back-to-back winners, who flexed their muscles just enough to crush Ginaflor Alanguilan and Katherine Rivera, 21-16.

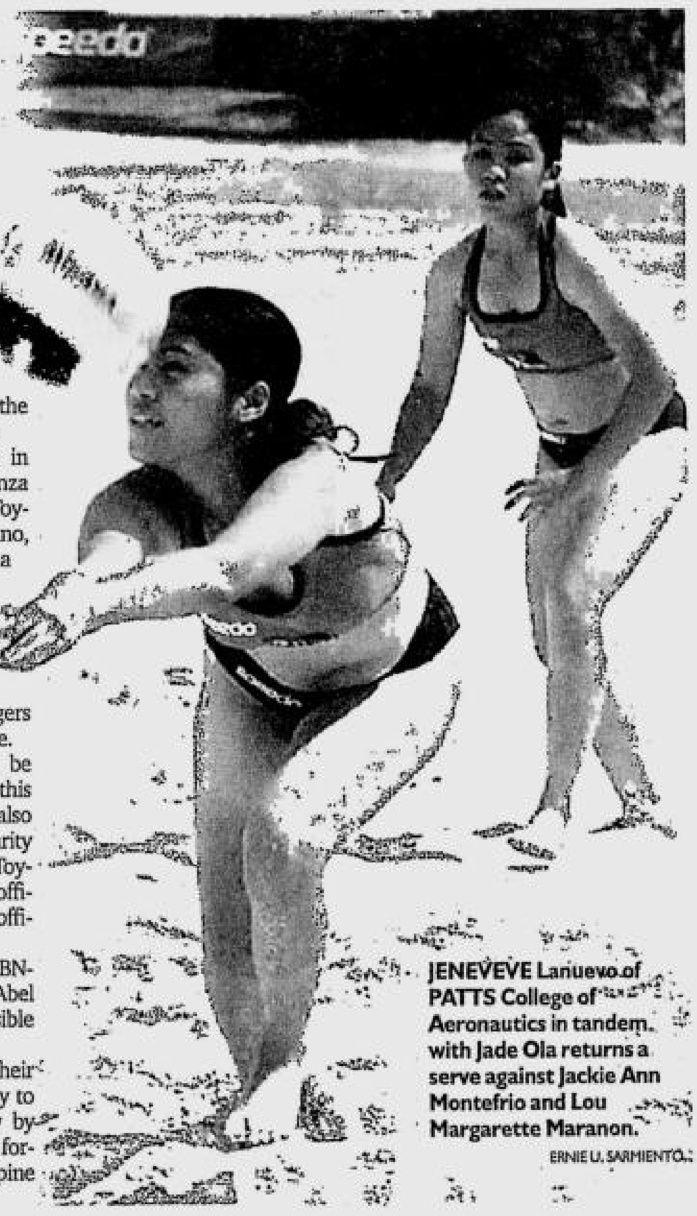
PATTS School of Aeronautics' Jenevive Lanuevo and Jade Ola, who are making their first appearance here, fought back from 12-19 but ran out of fuel in the end, yielding a close 18-21 loss to veterans Jackie Ann Montefrio and Lou Maranon in the opening day's most exciting game.

Making the ceremonial serve in this two-day volleyball extravaganza were Petron's Che-Che Tugbang, Toyota Pasong Tamo's Edwin Lozano, Speedo's Emmy Buccat and Tisha Abundo of the organizing Voltz Management Group. Also attending the simple opening ceremony were Clearwater CEO and president Nino Cinco and managers Richard Halewyck and Jon Vicente.

A top purse of P10,000 will be awarded to the champions of this Petron-sponsored event, which is also backed by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Pagcor and Toyota Pasong Tamo. Speedo is the official outfitter while Mikasa is the official ball.

The finals will be telecast on NBN-4 on a delayed basis courtesy of Abel Cruz of ALC Productions and Visible Video.

"The favorites are making their presence felt but it's still too early to predict another dominant show by the old-timers," said Abundo, a former commissioner of the Philippine Sports Commission.



JENEVEVE Lanuevo of PATTS College of Aeronautics in tandem with Jade Ola returns a serve against Jackie Ann Montefrio and Lou Margarette Maranon.

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

SPORTSWATCH

PBA 30th anniversary countdown

In celebration of the Philippine Basketball Association's coming 30th year anniversary, the league recently launched its 30-day countdown leading up to the night of festivity on April 9 at the Araneta Coliseum. Various activities and promotions have been put up in an effort to drum up the league's three decade of service as the country's prime entertainment program. "We enjoin the fans, who had been the very reason for the PBA's success, to celebrate with us the league's 30 years of existence," said commissioner Noli Eala. All former players and officials are advised to keep in touch with Hazel Ancheta at 638-18-15 to 17 to update the league's directory. Kicking off the countdown is a PBA trivia contest to be played in print, radio and TV.

HOOPS School registration on

GROWEE Hoops School is now ready to take in registrants willing to undergo its basketball training camps. Kids 6-11 will be under the Basic Program while those 12-17 will be under the Intermediate and Advance 1 and 2 (varsity) Programs. Growee HOOPS is set to start its sessions at the Meralco Gym March 30 from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. The clinics are handled by experienced coaches led by seven-time PBA Best Import Bobby Parks and former PBL Commissioner Charlie Favis. For details, call 687-4364, 687-2025 and 688-0167 or e-mail groweehoops@hotmail.com.

Six-Footers League tryouts set

CALLING all young, tall and gritty basketball players. The Six-Footers Basketball League will be holding its National Capital Region tryouts at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum on March 15 and 17 from 6 to 8 p.m. Coach Ching Ching Marcelino will be conducting the tryouts open to all players born from 1988 onward and standing no less than six feet. Interested parties can contact the Basketball Association of the Philippines at 52425 22. Project director Johnny Tam, who is also the coach of the RP youth team, said that two teams each from the NCR, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will shoot for the Six-Footers' Basketball League title in the national finals in Manila in April. The tournament, organized by the BAP and sponsored by Air21, was conceptualized two years ago by the national youth team's Godfather, Bert Lina. Calling the shots in the tryouts for NCR is BAP regional director Lito ALvarez (5242522). For Luzon the lead agency is Region II director Manny Gatchalian (0922-4499765). Leading the Mindanao tryouts is Mayor Rey Baula of Bukidnon.

Pelonia fight shown on IBC-13

REY Pelonia, the World Boxing Federation International welterweight champion, said he almost gave way to exhaustion before pulling off a unanimous decision victory over Mongolian Baira Kim Tuesday night at the Mandaluyong City Gym. But the sight of his sister cheering him and holding a placard with the words "I love you Rey Pelonia" gave him a second wind and the inspiration to fight on." Pelonia's win in the "More Classic Let's Get It On In Mandaluyong" will be aired by Jemah Television through IBC-13 tomorrow from 8-10 p.m.

Bautista faces Thai in Hawaii

WORLD Boxing Organization (WBO) Asia-Pacific bantamweight champion Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista fights in the United States for the first time today when he faces Thai Aree Phosuwangym at Honolulu's Neal Blaisdell Center in the main attraction of a card put up by the Hawaii-based Villaver International Production Inc. The undefeated Bautista (13-0, 9 KOs) weighed in at 118.5 lb while Phosuwangym came in at 118.25 at the Kalakawa Gym yesterday. Aree (8-2-1), who took a controversial loss from Rexon Flores for the WBO Asia Pacific flyweight crown last year in Manila, has vowed to shame Bautista before a crowd expected to be mostly Fil-Ams. "This is a much-anticipated fight in Hawaii," said Richard Villaver.

Salven Lagumbay

LPC hosts 3-cock derby tonight

EXCITING fights will be featured anew tonight in another 3-cock derby at the air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum. The 50-fight program will be sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Entry fee is P3,300. At stake is a cash prize of P300,000. Each champion will get a washing machine as bonus. Another 3-cock derby with the same format will be hosted by former Mayor Nene Aguilar on March 19. On Monday and Wednesday is the fifth leg of the Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines 7-Cock Derby. LPC's hackfight schedule is from Monday to Sunday, according to coliseum manager Alex Tobias. For details, call 873-1040 and 874-3910.

Filcobra lines up 68 encounters

THE FOURTH leg of the Filipino Cockers and Breeders Association 4-Cock Derby is set today at Roligon Mega Cockpit with 68 encounters lined up. The Filcobra executive council and Roligon managemet have decided to lower the admission prices to P200 and P300 today in response to requests from cocking aficionados. Hosts are Jerry Ang, Peter Uren of Zambales and Jimmy Machuca. Three entries topped the third leg last month: Wild Na Wild of Philip Chionbian and Edmund Yasay, Lista Na of JU Group and AS Alpha Siera. Attention will also be focused on the Filcobra Cocker of the Year race, where Colonel Tabique (Joy joy) and Nelson Uy (NU Red Hawk) lead with nine points each. For details, call 833-2275, 833-1638. and 852-9812.

Surigao 4-cocker April 1-2

FORMER Sen. Robert Barbers and gamefowl industry leader Thunderbird Power Feeds & Univet present the 4th Annual Invitational 4-Cock Derby at the New Zabala Recreation Center in Surigao City on April 1 and 2. The event stakes a guaranteed cash prize of P2 million for an entry fee of P20,000. On March 31, April 7, 9 and 14 Thunderbird Bexan XP joins Arcontica Coliseum in its high-stakes 2-cock *ulutan* with a purse of P1,130,000. Meanwhile, Sipalay City celebrates its fourth charter anniversary with a Special 4-Cock Derby promoted by Toto Calderon Jr. at the Gallera de Gil Montilla on March 26 and 27.

Runaway CorCup victory by Pasga

BAGUIO—The Philippine Amateur Senior Golfers Association banked on the steady play of Andy Co to top its division pulling away even as Omar Dungca spiked his overall individual victory with a hole-in-one yesterday in the 17th Philippine Corporate Cup golf championship at the Camp John Hay Golf Club here.

Co carried the load for teammates Jun Belicena, Pablo Soon and Shigemi Chikama with his division-best 97 points as Pasga finished with a two-day aggregate of 270 to beat Powerlux by 19 points in the seniors division of the tourney presented by SMART Gold.

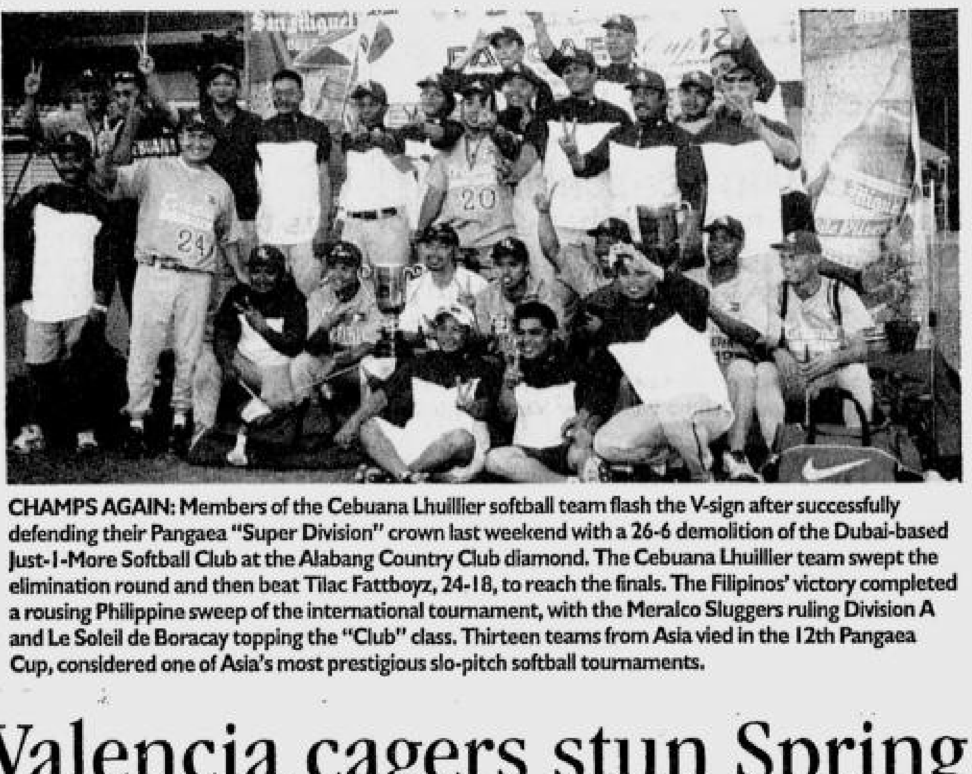
Dungca totaled 107 for two days to clinch low scoring honors. The Nueva Ecjia spearhead scored his ace on the 15th hole with a wedge shot in the final round and received a special 21-inch Samsung television set.

Camp John Hay Golf Club, Camp John Hay Leisure, Warbird and Dragon Horse ruled the other divisions the hard way in an exciting end to this year's meet now managed by Camp John Hay Leisure Corp. following a recent turnover from the Corporate Cup Foundation of the Philippines.

CJHGC, made up of Gen. Nelson Eslao, Goody Ignacio, Mars Garcia and Rock Molintas, claimed the Group I crown over City of Baguio with a 300 total. Garcia took the individual plum in his division with 102 points.

Rommel Gomez, Jay Co, Jeff Razon and Peng Perez de Tagle powered CJHL to a two-point win after amassing 267. LM Print Corp. wound up two points behind at 265. Group II individual champ was Eslao who had 99.

In Group III, Warbird and Corinthians 1440 figured in a tie for first but Warbird prevailed in the countback.



CHAMPS AGAIN: Members of the Cebuana Lhuillier softball team flash the V-sign after successfully defending their Pangaea "Super Division" crown last weekend with a 26-6 demolition of the Dubai-based Just-1-More Softball Club at the Alabang Country Club diamond. The Cebuana Lhuillier team swept the elimination round and then beat Tilac Fattboyz, 24-18, to reach the finals. The Filipinos' victory completed a rousing Philippine sweep of the international tournament, with the Meralco Sluggers ruling Division A and Le Soleil de Boracay topping the "Club" class. Thirteen teams from Asia vied in the 12th Pangaea Cup, considered one of Asia's most prestigious slo-pitch softball tournaments.

Alabang hosts showjumping tourney today

THE BEST six riders of the Sony Ericsson Showjumping Classic, set at 1 p.m. today and tomorrow at the Ayala Alabang Country Club, will represent the country in the Southeast Asian World Cup League in Malaysia and the finals in Manila in November.

Serving as the first qualifier for the selection of the Philippine team to the 2005 Southeast Asian games, the event will determine the top four riders who will be the Philippine team's regular members and two more who'll be the reserves.

Expected to see action are some of the country's top equestrians led by Asian Games gold medalist Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski, Olympian Toni Leviste, veterans Vittorio Barba and Janine S. Felix, as well as rising stars Daniela Virata, Joker Arroyo, Mikeli Mapua, Alexis Cortes and brothers Mateo and Diego Lorenzo.

The event will feature showjumping, entertainment, fun prizes and Sony Ericsson mobile phones and accessories. About 40 riders, some of whom will be riding two horses, will be competing.

Organized by Equisport Concepts Inc. and sanctioned by the Philippine Equestrian Federation, the event is open to the public.

Valencia cagers stun Spring

VALENCIA CITY—Expansion team Valencia Golden Harvest pulled a big surprise. Thursday night by beating Spring Cooking Oil-backed Laguna Spring, 98-84, to level the two-game NBC-Sulpicio Lines preseason basketball series here.

Mayor Ma. Jose Galario Jr.'s Golden Harvest cagers waxed hot from the start to avenge their 78-84 loss to Spring Wednesday.

Unheralded 6-foot-3 forward Mic-Mic Coldura starred for Valencia with 19 points and 13 rebounds as the hosts led, 78-63.

Spring will meet Cagayan de Oro Stars today and tomorrow at the Xavier University gym.

Meanwhile, NBC referee's supervisor, Ernie de Leon, conducted a clinic here yesterday in preparation for the league's opening on April 15.

The scores:

VALENCIA 94—COldura 19, Cabili 18, Toring 17, Tallgatos 14, Caliz 7, Royo 6, Adams 4, Clavel 3, Orunia 2, Cesar 0, Gragasin 0, Bayron 0

LAGUNA 84—Manuel 16, Reyes 14, Vivero 10, Corbin 7, Proceso 6, Kalaw 6, Domingo 5, Alejar 5, Nolasco 4, Lingal 4, Roda 3, Dalino 2, Alminario 2

Quarters: 27-21, 56-48, 78-69, 94-84

GOLD HAUL—Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco congratulates Amaya Paz for winning four gold medals in the recent 2005 Asian Archery Grand Prix in Bangkok, Thailand. At right is Raul Arambulo, who bagged one gold medal.

Kasparov, world's No. 1 chess player, retires

MOSCOW—Garry Kasparov, the world's No. 1 ranked chess player since 1984, considered by some the best in the history of the game, announced that he was retiring from professional play.

The Russian Grandmaster's stunning announcement came shortly after he won the 14-match Linares tournament in Spain on Thursday, despite losing the final game.

"Before this tournament, I made a conscious decision that Linares 2005 will be my last professional [tournament], and today I played my last professional game," Kasparov said at a news conference in Linares, according to a video posted on the online chess magazine chessbase.com.

He said his last games were "very difficult for me to play under such pressure, because I knew it was the end of the career which I could be proud of."

Kasparov, 41, became the youngest world champion ever at age 22, and quickly cut a swath through the chess world with an aggressive style that shunned settling for a draw. He said part of the reason he was retiring was because he saw no real goals left to accomplish in professional chess.

Kasparov has expressed increasing exasperation over the professional chess world, which has been bitterly divided since 1993 into two rival federations with rival champions. Kasparov reiterated Thursday that he was disappointed with a failed campaign to reunify the title.

He said he would continue to play chess, write books about it and take part in tournaments, such as so-called knockout events in which he plays many opponents at once, or in speed-chess games. But he is saying goodbye to lucrative, top-level professional play.

Earlier this year, Kasparov withdrew from a World Chess Federation championship match scheduled for this month, saying he had suffered financial and psychological damage from the match's repeated postponement.

His withdrawal announcement then, in which he said "it breaks my heart" to watch great tournaments from the sidelines, gave no hint he was considering leaving professional play. If anything, it suggested he was determined to remain.

"I will continue to serve chess and those who love our game," Kasparov wrote in January. "I have now held the No. 1 ranking for 20 years and I will defend my position against any opponent. My only retreat is from the battlefield of chess championship politics."

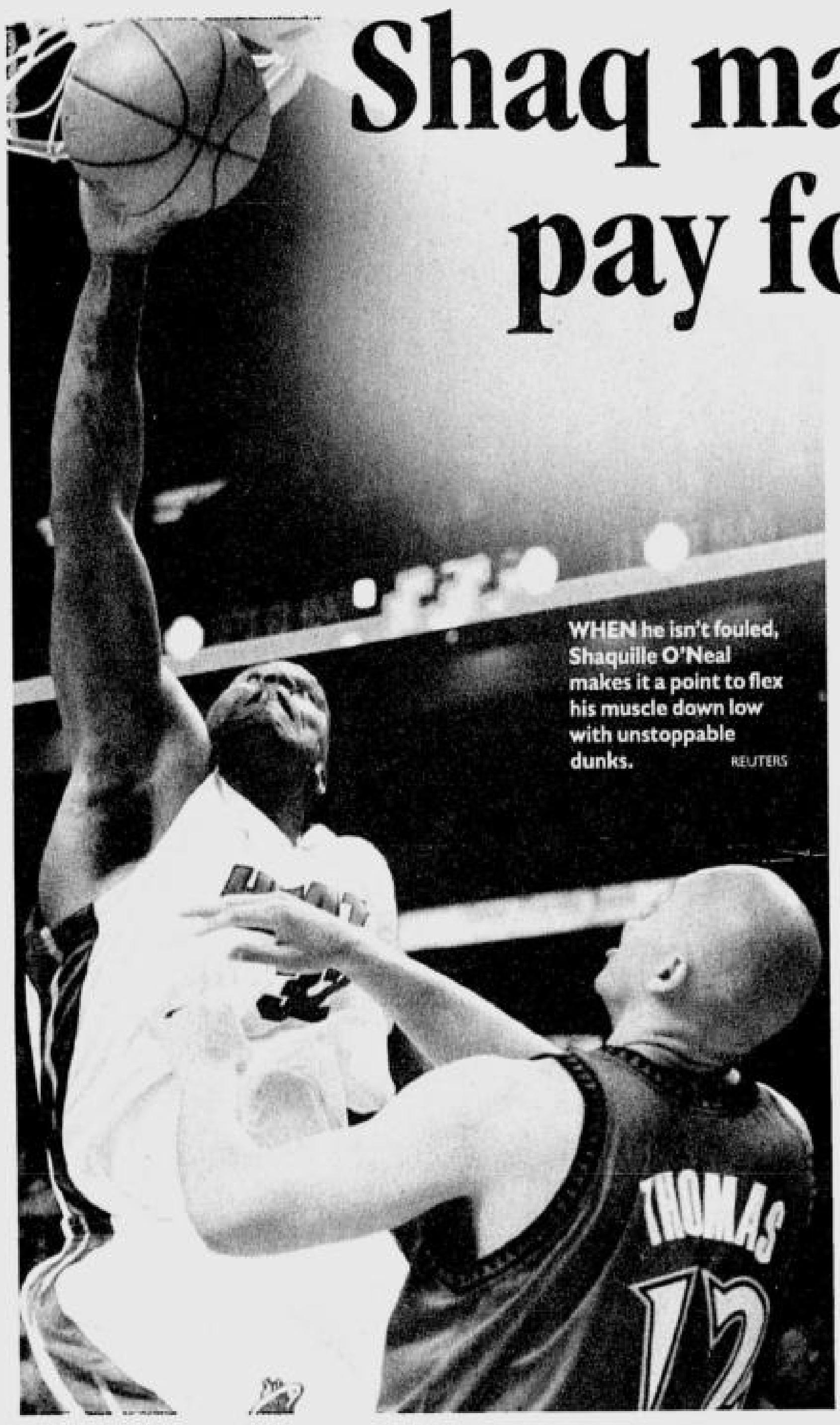
Kasparov could be intent on concentrating more on politics in Russia. He has emerged as an outspoken critic of President Vladimir Putin and is playing a leading role in the Committee 2008: Free Choice, a group formed by prominent liberal opposition leaders.

Born in Baku, in the then-Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, Kasparov is thought by many to be the best chess player in history. But he will be remembered in part for one of his few losses, a 1997 match against IBM supercomputer Deep Blue that was seen by some as a watershed moment in technological advancement.

In 2003, Kasparov averted a similar defeat when he agreed to a draw in the last game of his series against Deep Junior, which could process 3 million chess moves per second. The six-game series, dubbed Man vs Machine, finished tied 3-3. *AP*

KASPAROV: No goals left to accomplish

Shaq makes Wolves pay for the hacks



WHEN he isn't fouled, Shaquille O'Neal makes it a point to flex his muscle down low with unstoppable dunks. REUTERS

MIAMI—Shaquille O'Neal had 33 points, and the Miami Heat rode an 18-2 second-half surge to a seventh straight victory, 107-90, Thursday night over the Minnesota Timberwolves.

O'Neal added 13 rebounds, was 10-for-18 from the floor and—most surprisingly, considering he was a 46.2-percent foul shooter coming into the game—hit on 13 of 18 tries from the line.

O'Neal was fouled consistently by the Timberwolves, who were hoping to use the "Hack-a-Shaq" routine to stall the Heat.

The ploy did not work.

"Historically, I've shot 50 percent, so that's miss one and make one," said O'Neal. "The more attempts I get, it's like more practice. I'm not going to miss them all."

Dwyane Wade added 20 points for the Heat, who won their 11th straight at home and expanded their lead in the Eastern Conference to eight games over idle Detroit. Miami (47-16) has 19 regular-season games remaining.

"The real key stretch for us was at the end of the third quarter," said Miami coach Stan Van Gundy. "It was going south. They had an [eight-point] lead."

"We weren't playing very well, we weren't playing with a lot of energy and I thought that Keyon (Dooling) in particular gave us a real big lift in that stretch. Getting it tied was key."

Kevin Garnett had 22 points and 19 rebounds for Minnesota, which came in with a three-game winning streak.

The Timberwolves had won seven of their last eight games against Miami and led by eight points with 2:21 left in the third quarter, but shot just 31.8 percent the rest of the way.

Troy Hudson added 20 points for Minnesota.

Lakers 100, Mavericks 95

In Dallas, Kobe Bryant scored 36 points and made two huge plays on each end of the court in the last 1:20 to give the Los Angeles Lakers a win over the Mavericks to start a long road trip.

Bryant, who also had nine rebounds, grabbed one of them after Dallas missed two potential go-ahead shots with just over a minute left.

He took it all the way for a lay-up that put the Lakers up by three points, then came back and stripped Dirk Nowitzki from behind on a jump shot.

Bryant scooped up the loose ball and fed Jumaine Jones for a lay-up, but he missed and Bryant wound up putting it back in for a 98-93 lead with 58 seconds left.

Nowitzki, who scored 25 points but shot just 6-of-19, missed a 3-pointer with 11 seconds left that would have tied it at 98.

Los Angeles, in a tight, three-way race for the West's eighth and final playoff seed, had lost three straight games on the road.

The Lakers play 15 of their final 23 away from home, including six in a row starting with this one. *AP*

GM Antonio grabs lead in La Union

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union—Top seed Grandmaster Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. stopped the winning ways of Fide Master Fernie Donguines in the sixth round Thursday night to grab the lead in the 4th La Union Open Chess Championship at the Diego Silang Hall of the La Union provincial capitol here.

Antonio extracted the victory after a marathon 115 moves of a Spanish Opening to raise his total to 5.5 points, putting him alone at the top of the 122-player field.

"I forced the issue," said Army corporal Donguines, who tasted his first defeat and remained at 5.0 points with six others. "The game was drawish but I persisted to score a win."

The 41-year-old Antonio, the pride of Calapan City, was battling reigning national champion NM Darwin Laylo at presstime yesterday with the black pieces.

Laylo, head coach of the University of Santo Tomas team and a member of the RP team to last year's world chess Olympiad in Spain, also moved up to 5.0 points after beating FM Jesse Noel Sales in 81 moves of a King's Indian Defense.

Also in the seven-way tie for second with 5.0 points were second seed GM Eugene Torre, international masters Jayson Gonzales and Barlo Nadera, Donguines and NM Oliver Barbosa.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

Keon gets BSCP heads to settle row

By Jasmine W. Payo

NATIONAL training director Mike Keon has also assumed the role of mediator.

After months of failed meetings, the warring officials of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines finally agreed to settle their differences during a meeting with Keon Thursday.

"For the interest of the sport, I've asked them to come together," said Keon of his meeting with BSCP president Ernie Fajardo and secretary general Joaquin Perez de Tagle after receiving two different Southeast Asian Games training programs from BSCP.

"They both appeared so I asked them to sit down and thresh out the best aspect of both programs," said Keon. "I'm completely neutral on this."

Keon also advised both officials to finalize the BSCP program with billiards godfather Putch Puyat.

"I asked them to do it soon," noted Keon. "I need the training program. I'm being pressured by the First Gentleman Foundation to present the budget of all the [National Sports Associations]."

Francisco eyes longer pact, seeks new team

By June Navarro

GERARD Francisco, the Finals MVP when Sta. Lucia Realty won the 2001 PBA Governor's Cup, is shopping around for a new team.

Looking forward to a long-term contract when his three-year pact with the Realtors ended last month, the 6-foot-3 Francisco was disappointed after getting just a two-year contract extension offer from Sta. Lucia.

"Gerard declined to sign on the dotted line not because he didn't want the team's offer," said Gina Francisco, Gerard's sister and manager. He's just looking for a better deal that could give him a more stable contract."

Though the Realtors still own the rights to Francisco, the former UST standout is now in search of a team willing to hire him on a long-term basis.

Sta. Lucia Realty's offensive trio of Kenneth Duremdes, Dennis Espino and Marlou Aquino earn a monthly paycheck of P500,000, leaving the Realtors constricted with their salary cap.

"Money is never an issue with Gerard but my brother will settle down in a few years' time so he has to prepare himself for that," Gina told the INQUIRER.

"We're looking for a three-year contract at the least," she added.

Picked by the Realtors in the 1998 rookie draft, Francisco has so far spent his entire career with Sta. Lucia Realty.

POC misled me, says ex-swim president Ilagan

THE PHILIPPINE Amateur Swimming Association's (Pasa) former president seems unsinkable.

Chito Ilagan said yesterday that he was misled by the Philippine Olympic Committee arbitration committee into believing it will just issue a recommendation and not install Mark Joseph as new president.

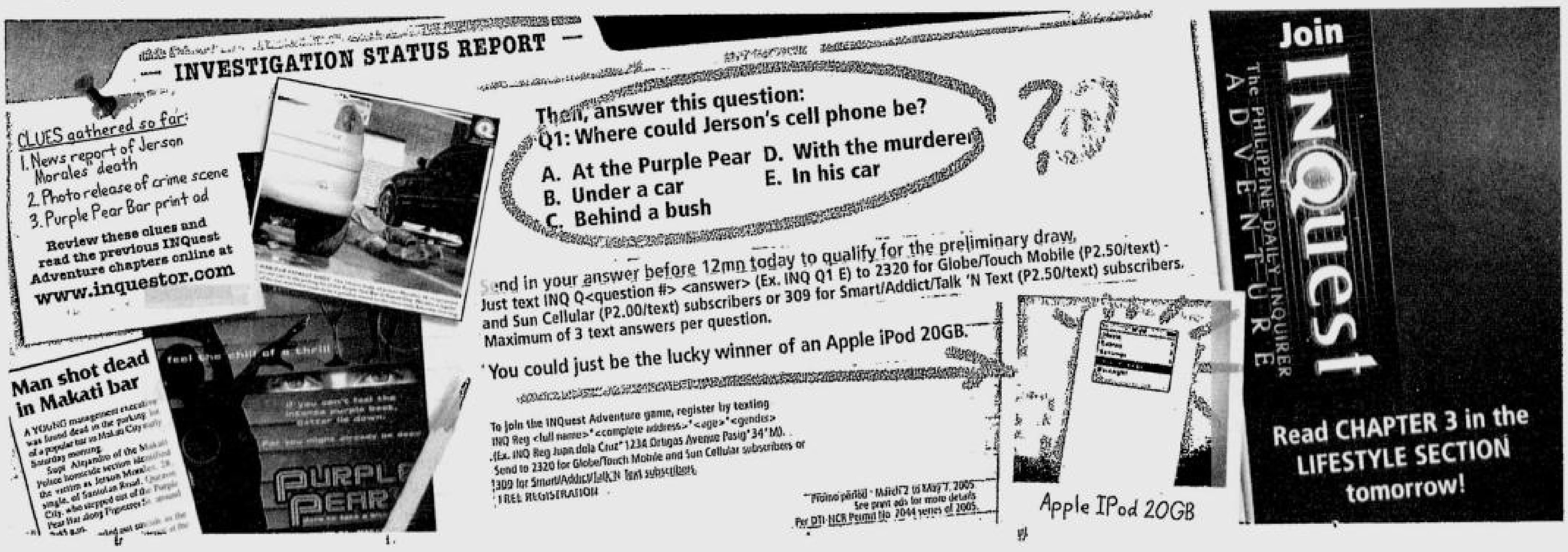
"We were not given due process," said Ilagan. "We have yet to receive a copy of the decision."

Ilagan, who also pointed out that Joseph is not a Pasa board member, said he has elevated the dispute to the international swimming body, Fina (Federation Internationale de Natation).

National training director Mike Keon, however, has already been dealing with Joseph regarding the Pasa's training program for the Manila 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

POC chair Robert Aventajado, head of the arbitration committee, had ruled that Ilagan "systematically changed the composition of the Pasa board" to assure his reelection in 2004.

Jasmine W. Payo



— INVESTIGATION STATUS REPORT —

CLUES gathered so far:
1. News report of Jerson Morales' death
2. Photo release of crime scene
3. Purple Pear Bar print ad

Review these clues and read the previous INQuest Adventure chapters online at
www.inquestor.com

Then, answer this question:
Q1: Where could Jerson's cell phone be?

A. At the Purple Pear
B. Under a car
C. Behind a bush
D. With the murderer
E. In his car

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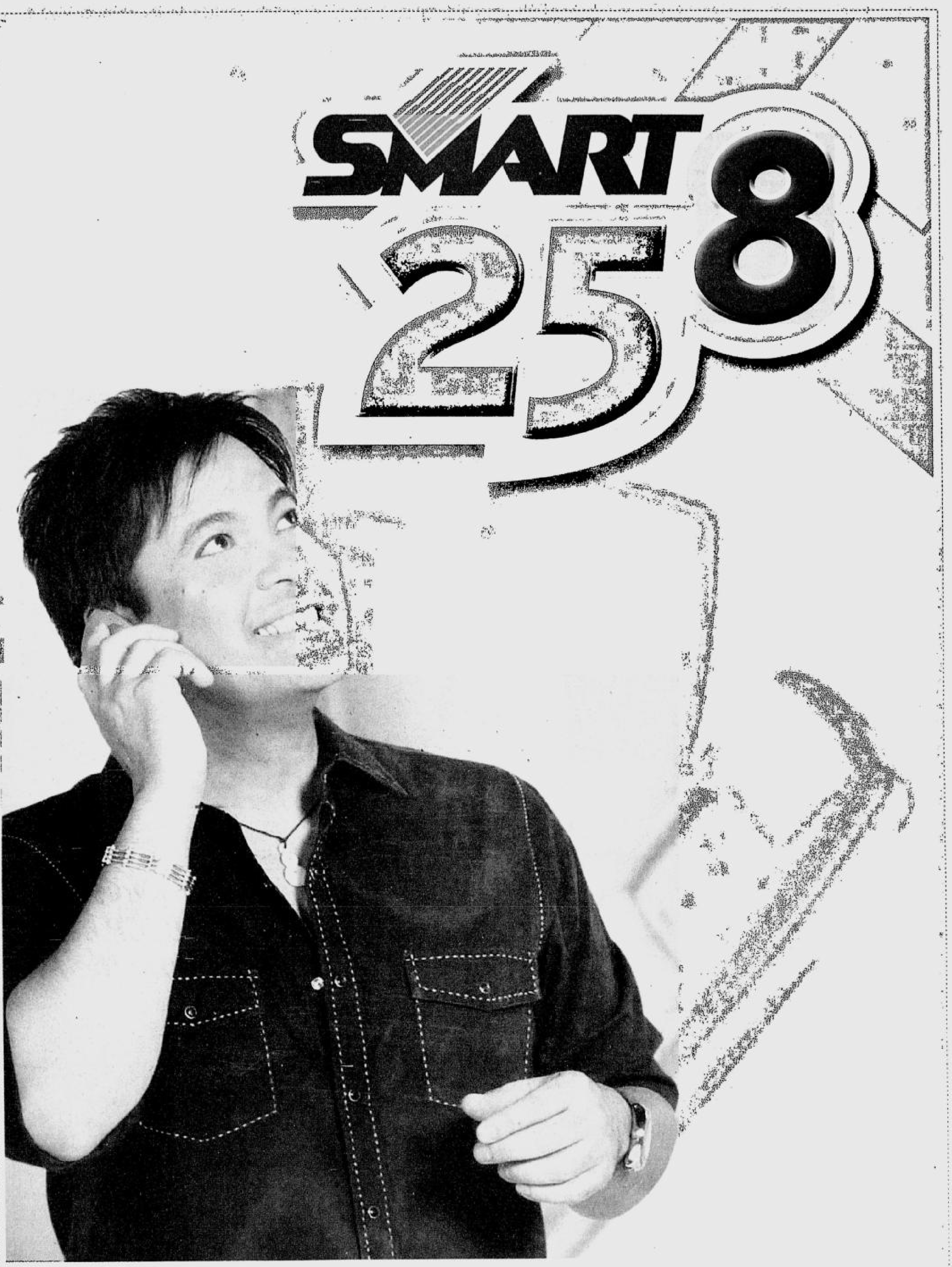

Time For A Paradigm Shift with SMART 25/8

There is a new paradigm shift in service that the mass consumer market wants in the cellular industry. It's called Unlimited Calls and Unlimited Text. For the next 30 days, SMART, the market leader in wireless, is introducing a fantastic new way of unlimited calling and texting. That service is called SMART 25/8.

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SATURDAY Special

Editor Nestor U. Torre
Assistant Editor Rito P. Asilo

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Big change of pace for Dolphy

By Nestor U. Torre

DOLPHY has been acting in sitcoms for decades, so his new show, "Quizon Avenue," is a big change of pace for him. It's still a comedy program, but it isn't plot-based. Instead it is a compendium of unrelated skits, jokes, punchlines, spoofs and other hopefully funny notions that, Dolphy and company trust, will keep viewers in stitches.

We caught the show's premiere telecast last Saturday night and found it bemusing in spots. Quite a number of the gags worked, and that was all to the good.

Singing and dancing ability

Dolphy was also able to do more than just play it funny, with occasional brief spots focusing on his singing and dancing ability.

Another plus point was the inclusion of three of Dolphy's sons in the show's cast. Eric, Jeffrey and Vandolph did their best to keep up with their vastly more experienced dad's antics, with Jeffrey coming off best.

For his part, Eric was similarly "game," but his comic scenes tended to be on the heavy side. Could his relative girth have something to do with it?

The best scene in the premiere show was a creative sequence in which the Quizons and some friends made lively music with the use of kitchen implements and other objects usually found in people's homes.

Sense of fun

Yes, the inspiration for the scene was old-hat, but the show's cast and director Al Quinn pulled it off with freshness and a catchy sense of fun.

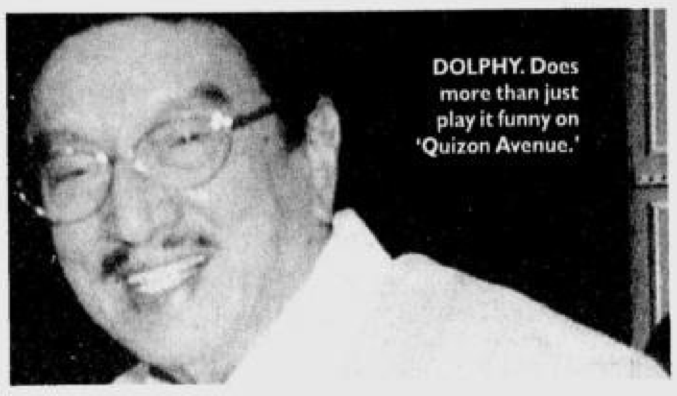
Unfortunately, some of the other skits and comic routines in the show weren't as inventive. More work needs to be done, therefore, to raise the level of the show, so it does full justice to Dolphy's hard-earned reputation as a comic icon.

The first telecast made quite extensive use of "classic" comedy routines, or fresh takes on old comic acts. They may still be funny, but will the younger generation of viewers warm up to them as much as their grandparents did?

If the answer is yes, then "Quizon Avenue" can become successful. Otherwise, the show will have to think up more current gags to keep the laughs coming.

A final note on the show's first telecast: The production's supporting cast of younger comics didn't have much to do, since many of the premiere show's routines concentrated on Dolphy and his sons. As a result, the supporting comedians came off more like extras than as significant elements of the show.

We trust that, after it's established itself, Channel 2's comedy show will give these supporting comedians more opportunities to strut their stuff. Otherwise, "Quizon Avenue" could become a dead-end street for them.


DOLPHY. Does more than just play it funny on 'Quizon Avenue.'

'Stairway' star wants recognition as a serious actor

SHOW BIZ Q & A

Rito P. Asilo

FROM Nathalie Querido: "I never miss an episode of GMA-7's 'Stairway to Heaven.' Please feature the actor who plays Cholo in the TV series."

KWON. Puts a premium on education.

Glad to oblige, Nathalie. We've always marveled at how much South Korea's film industry has boosted that country's tourism on the strength of its technically polished productions, picture-perfect locations and charming actors.

Kwon Sang Woo, the 28-year-old actor who plays Cholo on GMA-7's top-rated "Stairway to Heaven" (weekdays at 9 p.m.), is himself surprised at how popular he has become in other Asian countries. His fans may have a difficult time pronouncing his name correctly, but he nevertheless enjoys immense popularity.

On his recent visit to Japan for a Korean tourism sortie, local authorities were concerned that they couldn't handle the huge throng that gathered to welcome him at the airstrip in Haneda. They had to escort him to disembark at the bigger Narita airport.

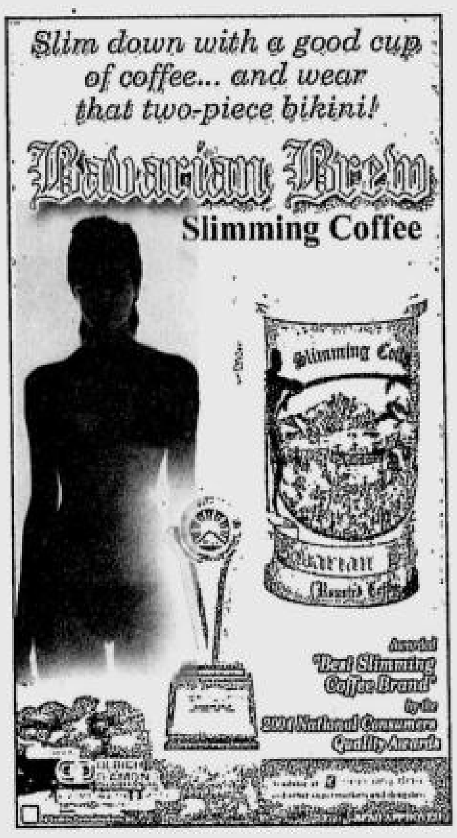
Thriving career

Despite his thriving career in entertainment, Kwon puts a premium on education. While most kids dream of becoming doctors, lawyers or airline pilots, his ambition had a more noble goal: He wanted to become a teacher. In 2003, he earned his degree in art education from Han Nam University.

We first saw him in Tae Gyun Kim's "Volcano High" (2001), an action-fantasy flick that takes place at a special high school for telekinetically gifted martial-arts students. By his third film, Kyeong Hyeong Kim's "My Tutor Friend," Kwon had earned his heartthrob stripes.

In the romantic comedy, he plays a spoiled rich kid, Ji-hoon, who seeks the help of a geeky but smart and feisty tutor, Su-wan, to graduate from high school—or else, as his father threatened,

'STAIRWAY'/A2-2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Versatility, generosity keep Eddie Garcia on top

By Nestor U. Torre

GARCIA. Plays a priest in "Ang Birhen ng Manaoag."

THE AMAZING thing about Eddie Garcia's longevity in the movies is that, when he "admits" that he's in his early 80s, most people don't believe him. Isn't that a beautiful switch? In the film world, most stars subtract from their age to seem younger, but Eddie is perceived to be making himself older than he really is!

Relatively young

Now, what would be his motive for doing that? When we ask his doubters that key question, all they can manage by way of mumbling reply is, "Well, maybe he wants to seem older, so we can all marvel at how relatively young he looks!" Yeah, right.

Sorry to "disappoint" the doubters, but the factual data is there for all to appreciate: Eddie Garcia was born in Sorsogon on May 2, 1921—so, that makes him 84 two months from now (make sure you greet him Happy Birthday!).

These thoughts come to mind, because we were recently impressed to see Eddie virtually all over the place in show biz, at a time when most of his contemporaries are either gone or retired. And yet, Eddie continues to act in front of the camera, sometimes even in lead roles.

For instance, he plays the cantakerous old man who drives his family crazy even on his "deathbed" in new filmmaker Rica Arevalo's full-length digital movie, "ICU Bed No. 7," which will be shown at the first Cinemalaya festival this July.

And, in the current "Ang Birhen ng Manaoag" by Ben Yalung, Eddie plays a priest for the umpteenth time in his career.

What makes Eddie so unsinkable in the film biz? Aside from talent and love for the profession, he's one of the most organized and responsible movie workers we know, as well as one of the most pragmatic.

Billing

Many stars make a big deal about "proper" billing, but Eddie doesn't care how he's billed in a movie's credits, as long as the role he plays is a meaty one that will challenge him, and delight and move his audience.

He is also able to work on numerous TV and film assignments in the same time period, because he's a master when it comes to scheduling. And he's great at "continuity," too: He's devised a reliable system to guide him as to which costumes and props he's worn and used for specific scenes in different productions, so

VERSATILITY/ A2-3

'Stairway'

From page A2-1

he would be sent abroad! Then, sparks fly between the unlikely duo.

The film almost eclipsed South Korea's 2003 box-office champion, "Marrying the Mafia," which starred Kim Jeung Eun (the actress who played Vivian on the hugely popular "Lovers in Paris").

Last year, Kwon topbilled the dramatic opus, "Once Upon A Time in High School" (retitled here as "The Spirit of Jeet Keun Do"), and the romantic-comedy, "Love So Divine," about a Catholic seminarian who falls in love with a cathechism student. His latest *telenovela*, "Sad Sonata," started its telecast last January.

When asked about turning a year older last Aug. 5, he said: "I used to be particular about my looks. Now that I'm nearing 30, I don't mind seeing crow's feet around my eyes."

Loyalty

He is known for his loyalty to friends. Once, he even cried unabashedly when a co-actor was called for military duty!

When Kwon bagged the Blue Dragon Award's most popular actor title (for "Miracle on the Han"), he expressed his desire to be taken seriously as an actor. He said he would have preferred the best actor prize (he was nominated for "My Tutor Friend"), instead. He visited Boracay for a photo shoot recently.

He may have to go Hollywood soon: He has been offered a role in "Golden Dragon," starring Chow Yun Fat. His next film is the cop movie, "Wild Beast."

Derivative

From page A2-3

Baio, playing himself—as a has-been actor getting bumped off his guest spot on a TV talk show. Ouch!

Unfortunately, the novelty of seeing these familiar faces soon wears off. And the likable presence of Ricci and Eisenberg can only do so much to save a movie replete with repetitive side-plots and obligatory thrill-chill conventions. You just *know* that you've already seen them many times over.

Nope, the movie isn't cursed. It will still elicit some genuine screams, but if you are into werewolf films, go rent Grant Harvey's "Ginger Snaps Back: The Beginning" or Neil Marshall's scary "Dog Soldiers," instead.

Web . . .

From page A2-6

concern. These were his words of wisdom:

"We are part of the earth, and it is part of us.

The perfumed flowers are our sisters;

The deer, the horse, the great eagle,

These are our brothers.

The rocky crest, the juices of the meadows,

The body heat of the pony, and man

All belong to the same family.

So, when the great chief in Washington sends word

That he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us.

(To be concluded)

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12:35 / 2:45 / 4:55 / 7:05 / 9:15
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1:00 / 3:00 / 5:00 / 7:00 / 9:00
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SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
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❷ HOSTAGE
12:55 / 3:25 / 5:55 / 8:25
❸ CONSTANTINE
11:20 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40
❹ BIRHEN NG MANAOAG
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NOW SHOWING

Derivative chills in new Wes Craven thriller

By Rito P. Asilo

"Cursed"

D: Wes Craven

S: Christina Ricci, Joshua Jackson

ON their way home one moonlit night, something smashes against the windshield of Ellie (Christina Ricci) and Jimmy's (Jesse Eisenberg) car. They hit another vehicle, swerve to a curb, and hurtle down a slope. As Ellie assists the other car's trapped driver out of the wreckage, a shadowy figure tears and snatches the woman away, and leaves them with what look like claw marks. The succeeding days see their lives change drastically.

Ellie, who works as a production assistant for "The Late Late Show," notices her increasingly heightened senses, and begins to assume a sexier mien that guys (like commitment-wary Jake, portrayed by Joshua Jackson) can't resist.

Meanwhile, Jimmy, who's been bullied by campus jocks all his life, finds himself jumping over fences and outwrestling not just one but three athletes! He suddenly gets the attention of the popular girl he's had a crush on. Even the high school jock (Milo Ventimiglia), who used to pick on him, turns from tormentor to love-struck admirer!

With things going their way, the siblings, despite having the time of their lives, try hard not to succumb to temptations of the flesh—and we don't mean that metaphorically! But, to put an end to the curse, they have to annihilate the top dog—ah, werewolf—and "separate his head from his heart." But, as Kevin Williamson's stories go, this is easier said than done.

Director Wes Craven ("Scream") resorts to worn-out fright contrivances that, despite several attempts at humor, fall short and flat. (The gags and snags may work for you, though, if you have not seen films of this genre in the last 20 years.) Williamson churns out an uninspired, unoriginal script that hopes to wing it through Craven's tired but occasionally effective scary tactics.

The film also utilizes a nudge-and-wink approach with amusing tongue-in-cheek candor, and a flurry of cameos that feature celebrities who are willing to make fun of themselves: Mandy Moore, singer Mya, Shannon Elizabeth ("American Pie"), Portia De Rossi, Scott Foley, Skeet Ulrich, N'Sync's Lance Bass and Omar Epps. And, there's Scott

DERIVATIVE/ A2-2

RICCI. Her likable presence can't save a movie replete with repetitive side-plots.

Versatility

From page A2-2

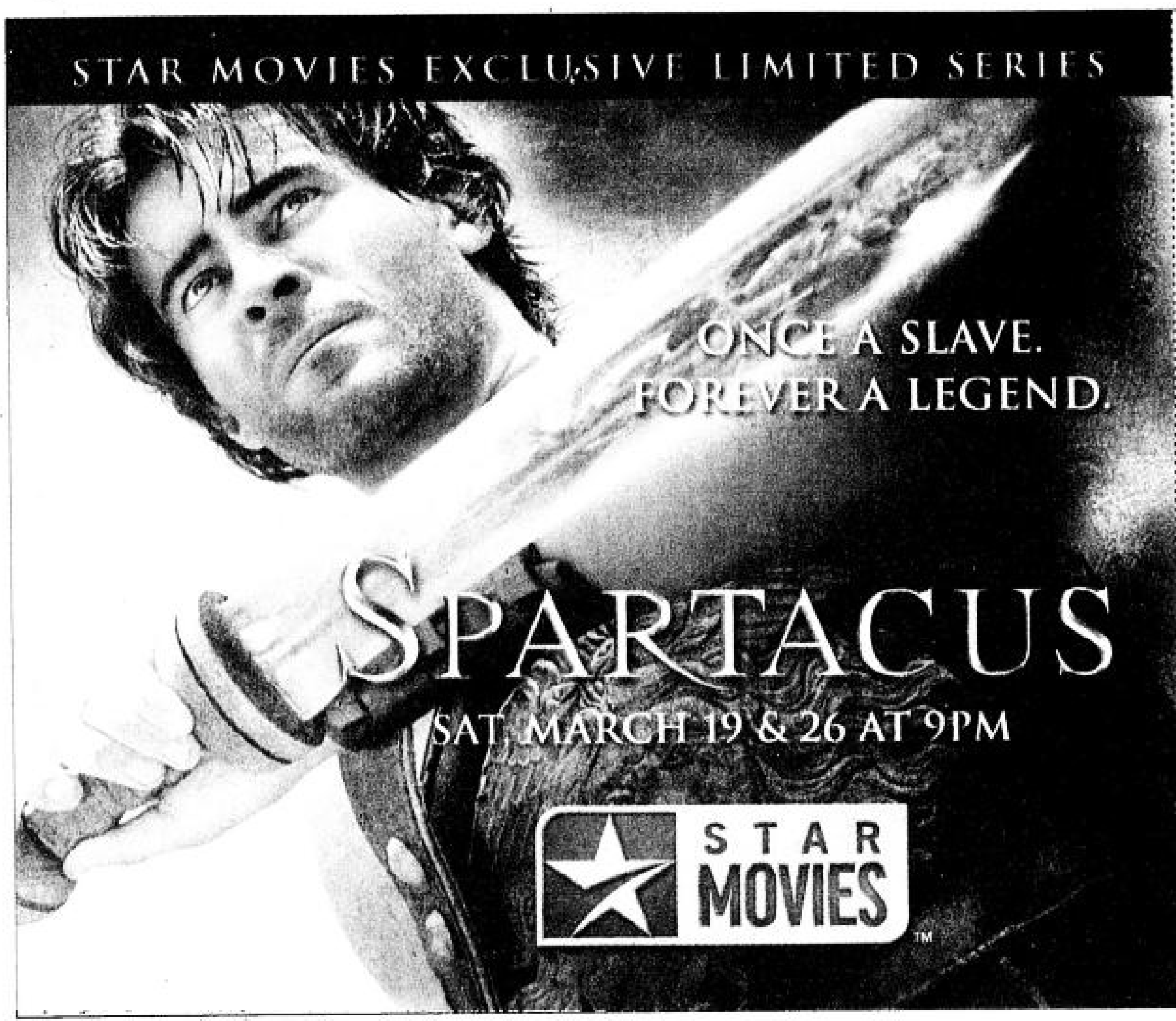
that he doesn't cause his directors any grief.

In addition, he's very generous with his compleat film knowledge and experience, giving helpful pointers to young filmmakers, so that they can do better work and survive the scathing scrutiny of self-styled film critics.

Career

Thus, prospective filmmakers are duly advised: If you want to have a long and flourishing career in the movies, do it the Eddie Garcia way!

Still in film harness at 83, Eddie has beaten the odds in the crapshoot that is the movie biz. He has chalked up a lot of accomplishments, but still has more interesting film roles to play before he calls it a wrap.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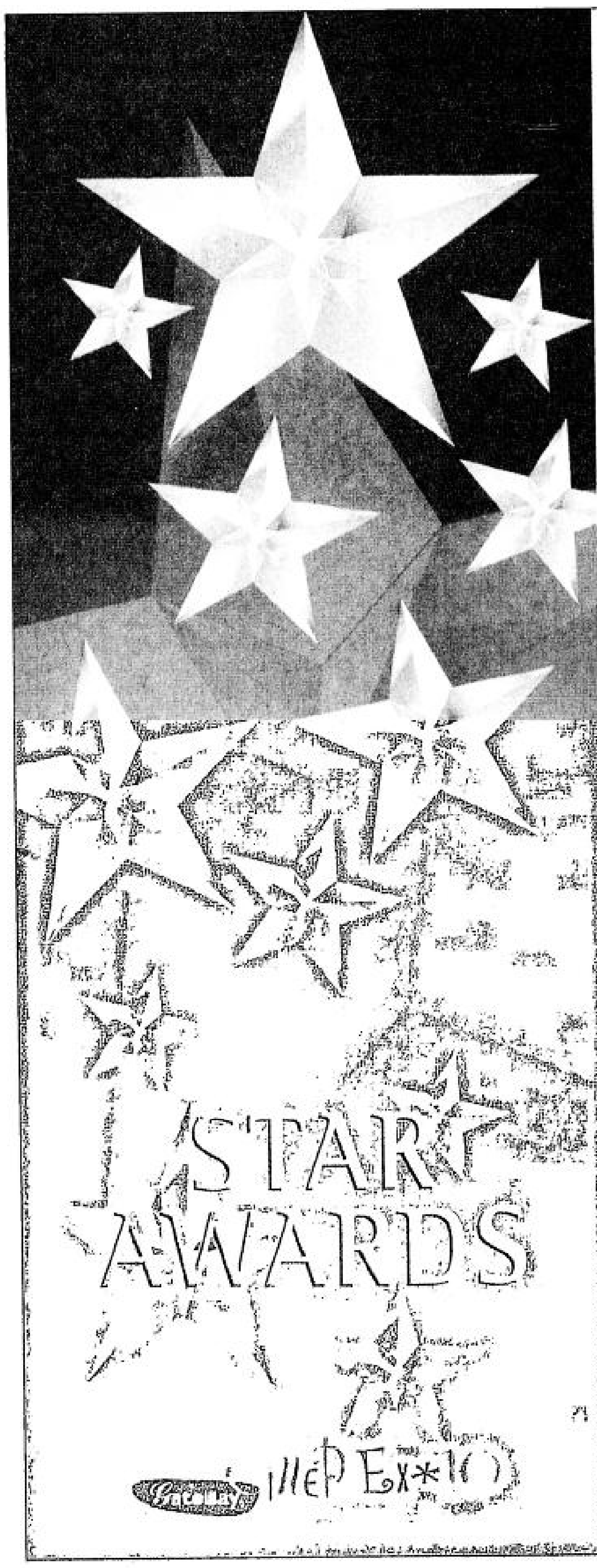

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[illegible] E: OYSTER BOY, GLORIA JEAN'S, HOTSHOTS, MILLENIUM CAFé, WENDY'S, MC DONALD'S, KFC, DIMSUM & DUMPLINGS, NACHO FAST, SUBWAY, RED RIBBON, ICE MONSTER, BACOLOD INASAL CHICKEN

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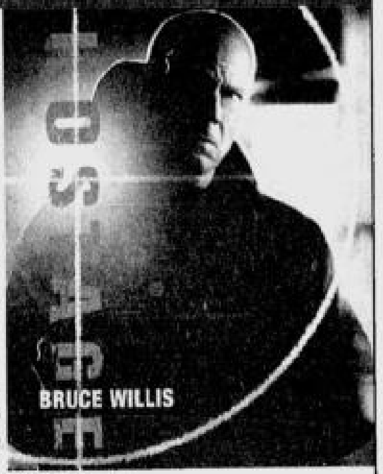

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1. THE FINAL CUT
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2. HOSTAGE
11:30 FS / 12:00 MI / 2:25 / 4:50 / 7:15 9:10 LFS / 9:40 LMF / 11:35 END
633-8970

sm megamall cinema 1
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
11:35 FS / 12:00 MF / 2:45 / 5:30 8:15 / 10:35 LFS / 11:00 LMF / 1:30 END
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METRO MANILA

sm megamall
1 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
2 CURSED
3 HOSTAGE
4 CONSTANTINE
5 THE FINAL CUT
6 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
7 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
8 HITCH
9 SON OF THE MASK
10 RESERVED
11 RESERVED
12 RESERVED

sm city fairview
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 DREAMBOY
3 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
4 CONSTANTINE
5 HITCH
6 BUNSHINSABA
7 HOSTAGE
8 SON OF THE MASK
9 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
10 INFECTION
11 CURSED
12 THE AVIATOR

sm city north edsa
1 CONSTANTINE
2 HITCH
3 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
4 SINING PINAGPALA
5 FINAL CUT
6 CURSED
7 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
8 HOSTAGE

sm city manila
1 HOSTAGE
2 THE AVIATOR
3 LOVE ME IF YOU DARE smcinemaexclusive
4 HITCH
5 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
6 CONSATINTINE
7 THE FINAL CUT
8 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
9 SON OF THE MASK
10 INFECTION
11 CURSED
12 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest

sm city sta. mesa
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
5 HOSTAGE
6 SON OF THE MASK
7 CONSTANTINE
8 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
9 HITCH
10 CURSED

sm city southmall
1 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
2 CONSTANTINE
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED
5 THE AVIATOR
6 SON OF THE MASK
7 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
8 HOSTAGE
9 HITCH
10 CURSED

sm city bicutan
1 HOSTAGE
2 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 CURSED

sm cinema tutuban
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

sm supercenter sucat
1 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
2 CURSED
3 HOSTAGE
4 MILLION DOLLAR BABY

LUZON

sm city pampanga
1 SON OF THE MASK
2 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
3 CONSTANTINE
4 HITCH
5 BUNSHINSABA
6 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest

sm city baguio
1 THE AVIATOR
2 MUSAR MUSIC RECITAL
3 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
4 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

sm city batangas
1 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
2 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
3 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
4 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

sm city dasmariñas
1 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
2 HITCH
3 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
4 SON OF THE MASK

sm city marilao
1 HITCH
2 CONSTANTINE
3 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest
4 THE AVIATOR

sm city bacoor
1 BUNSHINSABA
2 SON OF THE MASK
3 HOSTAGE
4 HITCH
5 CONSTANTINE
6 CURSED
7 THE AVIATOR
8 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest

sm city lucena
1 CONSTANTINE
2 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
3 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
4 BIRHEN NG MANAOAG smmoviefest

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

sm city cebu
1 A MAN CALLED DREAMER (STAGE PLAY)
2 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED
5 THE AVIATOR
6 INFECTION
7 SON OF THE MASK
8 HOSTAGE

sm city iloilo
1 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
2 RESERVED
3 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
4 SON OF THE MASK
5 CONSTANTINE
6 INFECTION
7 RESERVED
8 ALFIE

sm city davao
1 ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13
2 INFECTION
3 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
4 LITTLE BLACK BOOK
5 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX smcinemaexclusive
6 THE AVIATOR

sm city cagayan de oro
1 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
2 GOSPEL OF JOHN smmoviefest
3 RAY
4 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

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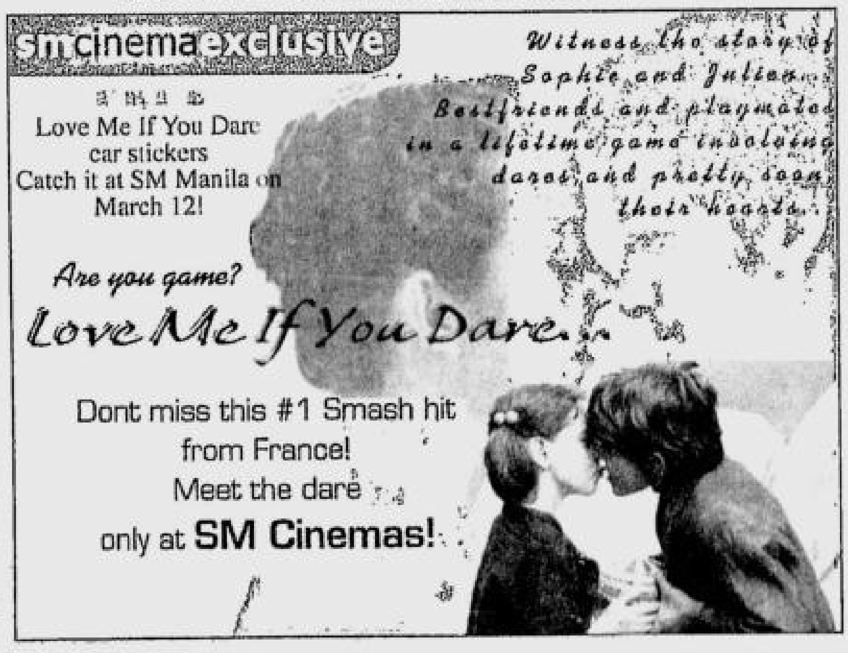

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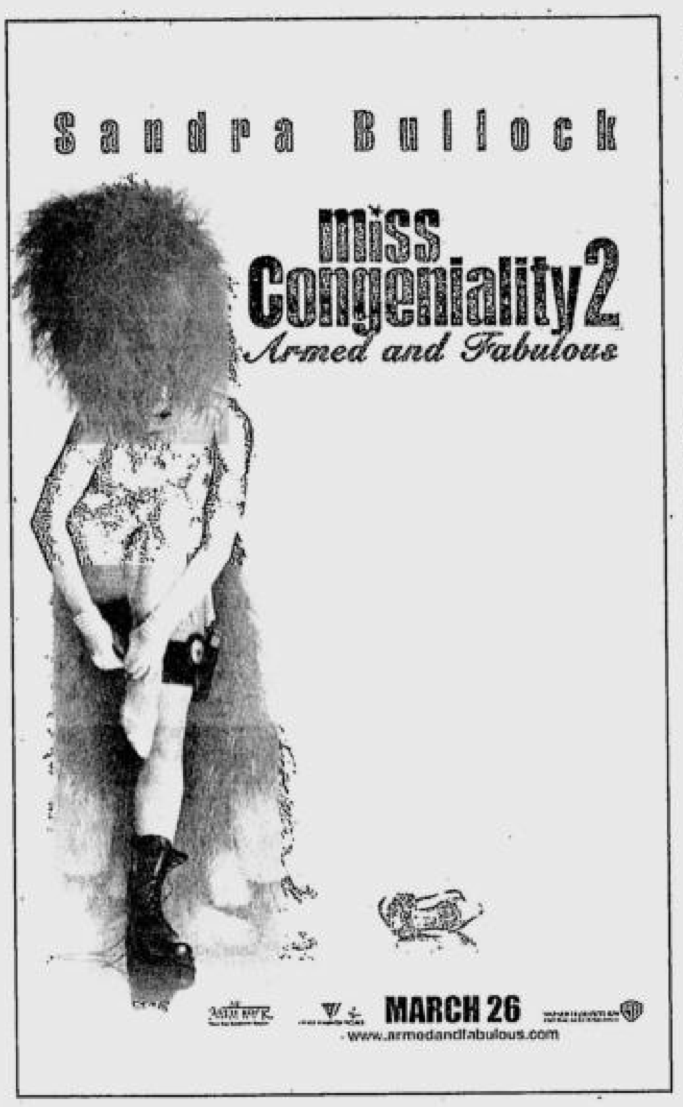

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1 MILLION DOLLAR BABY 11:30, 2:30, 5:30 8:25, 11:15 PG-13
2 HOSTAGE 12:30, 3:10, 5:50, 8:30, 11:05 R-13
3 HITCH 12:10, 2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:05 PG-13
4 CURSED 11:40, 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:30 PG-13

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CURSED PG13 1:20,3:30,5:40,7:50,10:00
MILLION DOLLAR BABY PG13 11:30,2:10,4:50,7:30,10:15
FINAL CUT PG13 12:30,2:30,4:30, 6:30,8:30,10:30
HITCH PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:20
LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS GP 12:30,2:50,5:10,7:30,9:50
HOSTAGE R13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:15

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3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY MTRCB: PG-13 12.30, 3.20, 6.10, 9.00 LMF
4 THE FINAL CUT MTRCB: PG-13 12:00, 2:15, 4:30, 6:45, 9:00 LMF
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Key changes noted in local movies

By Nestor U. Torre

MONTANO. Has helped revive the Cebuano film industry.

GOSSIP-ORIENTED show biz talk shows are currently under fire for irresponsible practices, and for stressing silly entertainment "news," rumor and character assassination over the truly significant developments in local entertainment,

Indeed, if you watch show biz talk shows on TV, you'd think that nothing much happens in entertainment here, other than stars falling in and out of love (and in and out of bed), feuding with each other, being caught "starring" in sex videos, *ad nauseum*.

Fact is, however, the local show biz scene has been experiencing changes that will eventually affect its products, and the mass audience that patronizes them, for good *and* bad.

Developments

Some of those key but under-reported developments include:

- The rise of digital feature filmmaking, which will open up the local movie scene to many more new filmmakers. It is hoped that this will result in fresh filmmaking approaches that will revive viewers' interest in Filipino movies.
- Major changes in the composition of the local movie audience. Since ticket prices have gone up so much, the "*bakya*" crowd of old has generally stopped watching movies in theaters. Instead, it views tapes or discs of films at home.

Thus, when we talk about moviehouse audiences these days, we're no longer talking of C-D-E viewers, but of the A-B-C-D crowd. This in turn has led to changes in the kinds of movies they favor, thus compelling filmmakers to upgrade the quality of their products.

- More government incentives to motivate producers to come up with better films, like the Cinema Evaluation Board, the Cinemalaya film festival for new filmmakers, and showcases for outstanding Filipino movies in film festivals and markets abroad, all under the auspices of the Film Development Council of the Philippines.

Training

- Better training for film artists and craftsmen, through new schools like the Asia Pacific Film Institute, courses for new producers, workshops in key crafts like editing, cinematography and musical scoring, etc.
- More money for Mowelfund, the industry's welfare organization, so it can be of better service to the thousands of movie workers who are ill, jobless or destitute.
- A decline in the production of sexy flicks, the result of the general outcry against exploitative and sleazy flicks.
- The revival of the Cebuano film industry, thanks to Cesar Montano's initiative in producing and directing "Panaghoy sa Suba."
- The rise of civic and church groups like the CBCP's Cinema, that seek to give viewers better guidance on which films they should patronize, to in turn persuade filmmakers to do more responsible work.

These and other developments may not be as titillating as the stuff of which gossip-oriented show biz talk shows are made, but they will prove to be vastly more important in the long run, so they need to be given the coverage and importance they deserve.

Authentic flavors

WORD OF MOUTH

Sandy Daza

ITALIAN cuisine is very popular in Manila. Unfortunately, most of the cooking done here doesn't do justice to its authentic flavors.

For the right stuff, check out Cantinetta, a relatively new Italian restaurant on Pasong Tamo ext. The place has a nice casual dining area with an open kitchen and friendly staff.

We chose these dishes: A platter of antipasti. Three kinds of pasta. A pesto mare, ravioli fungi, tagliatelle tartufo and pizza formaggi. My father-in-law Toti Mendoza and sister-in-law Tina Rodriguez were with us during our food trip.

The antipasti were good, but nothing out of the ordinary. These consisted of an assortment of mortadello, prosciutto, parma ham, salami milano, fresh mozzarella and plump tomatoes. The pizza topping was no great shakes, but the crust was excellent: It was thin and chewy. You could tell that, with the right topping, it would be a great-tasting pizza.

Assortment

The pesto mare was an assortment of blanched seafood over a perfectly al dente spaghetti and creamy pesto sauce. It was simply delicious! Pesto sauce has become too common and has lost its novelty; this version was a welcome change.

We all fell madly in love with the taglietelle tartufo. This is egg pasta cooked al dente with a parmesan white cream sauce, and drizzled with white truffle oil. Superb!

Cantinetta is located at Karrivin Plaza A, 2316 Pasong Tamo ext., Makati. Call 892-9873.

Happy eating!

KURОSAWA. Some of his films explore the complex lives of seemingly ordinary people.

Kurosawa honored

By Noelani Torre

FILM lovers were treated to the works of Akira Kurosawa early this month via the annual Japanese Film Festival, Eiga Sai, at the CCP Dream Theater.

Featuring eight of his films, the festival strove to give us a comprehensive introduction to the oeuvre of a filmmaker who has long been considered one of the greatest auteurs of world cinema.

Included in the film listing were his two best-known works: "Seven Samurai" and "Rashomon" (In the Woods). The latter, which won the grand prize at the 1951 Venice International Film Festival, was instrumental in bringing international attention to Kurosawa and Japanese cinema.

Points of view

Based on a story by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, the film, through the use of multiple points of view, expounds on the related themes of truth, perception and the impossibility of objectivity. Through the years it has proven to be a highly influential film, especially for Hollywood filmmakers.

"Seven Samurai," an epic set in 16th century Japan, was reworked as a western—John Sturges' "The Magnificent Seven"—a film many consider to be one of the genre's best. Even the ever-so-popular "Star Wars" was inspired by yet another Kurosawa film, "The Hidden Fortress."

Eiga Sai's listing also includes his first-ever film, "Sugata Sanshiro" (Judo Saga), released in 1943 and shot during World War II.

Samurai

Though most people think of Kurosawa as a maker of samurai and period films, he also excelled in exploring the more prosaic, but equally complex lives of ordinary people.

This is illustrated in three of the festival's featured films: "Mada Dayo!" (Not Yet), "Ikiru" (Doomed), and "Warui Yatsu Hodo Yoku Nemuru" (The Bad Sleep Well).

Another lesser-known aspect of Kurosawa's filmmaking is his foray into film noir. There are two featured films that fall under this category: "Norainu" (Stray Dog) and "Tengoku to Jigoku" (High and Low).

Though based on a fast-paced American detective novel, "High and Low" is deliberately paced, with Kurosawa choosing to focus on a man's struggle with his conscience, and on the depiction of poverty and drug addiction.

SeeMall!

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ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU
THX 1 HOSTAGE	1 HITCH	1 SPANGLISH	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 1 SPANGLISH 12:50, 3:30, 6:10, 8:50, 11:30	1 HOSTAGE
2 HITCH	2 HOSTAGE	2 THE FINAL CUT	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 2 HOSTAGE 1:40, 4:05, 6:30, 8:55, 11:20	2 AVIATOR
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY	3 SPANGLISH	GUARANTEED SEATS THX 3 HITCH 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 LEMONY SNICKET'S 1:30, 3:45, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	3 SIDEWAYS
4 CURSED	4 BIRHEN SA MANAOG	4 CONSTANTINE	GUARANTEED SEATS 4 MILLION DOLLAR BABY 1:10, 3:45, 6:20, 8:55, 11:30	4 INFECTION
5 LEMONY SNICKET'S		5 CURSED	GUARANTEED SEATS 5 HITCH 1:25, 3:45, 6:05, 8:25, 10:45	5
		6 HOSTAGE		
		7 MILLION DOLLAR BABY		

GB1 GREENBELT 1
1 HITCH 11:50, 2:15, 4:40, 7:05, 9:30
2 HOSTAGE 12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40

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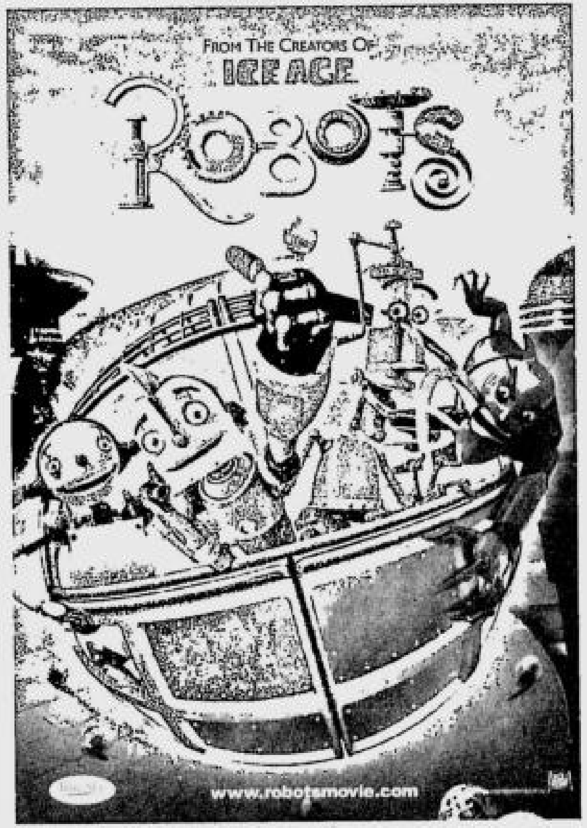

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GALLERIA 632-9115/16

1 CONSTANTINE • THX
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
2 THE FINAL CUT
10:50 1:05 3:20 5:35 7:50 10:00
3 HOSTAGE
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
4 CURSED
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
5 HITCH
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
6 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
7 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
12:40 3:40 6:40 9:40
8 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
9 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
11:00 1:50 4:40 7:30 10:00
10 SON OF THE MASK 2
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 HOSTAGE
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10.00
2 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45
3 HITCH
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 CURSED
10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45
5 THE FINAL CUT
10:20 12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8:05 10:00
6 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
10:50 1:35 4:20 7:05 9:50
7 CONSTANTINE
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
11:40 2:00 4:20 6:40 9:00
2 CONSTANTINE
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00
3 SON OF THE MASK 2
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10
4 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 9:00
5 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
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7 HOSTAGE
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12;30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30

NOVALICHES 935-3229/31

1 HOSTAGE
10:20 12:50 3:20 5:50 8:25
2 HITCH
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 8:55
3 CONSTANTINE
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25
4 CURSED
11:00 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:25
5 BUNSHINSABA
11:00 1:00 2:50 4:50 6:50 8:40
6 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
11:00 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:25
7 RESERVE
8 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-6378

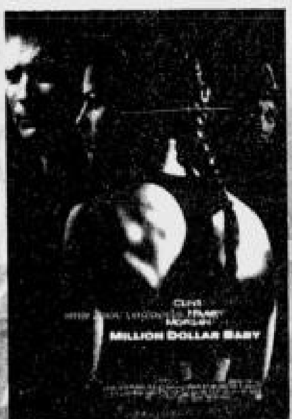
1 HITCH
2 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
3 CURSED
4 HOSTAGE

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 SAKSI...DRIVER
2 CONSTANTINE
3 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
4 RACING STRIPES

CAINTA 240-4881

1 HITCH
2 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
3 CURSED
4 HOSTAGE



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4 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
5 HITCH

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4 NIGHT JOB
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3 HITCH
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5 SON OF THE MASK 2

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3 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
4 SIDEWAYS

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2 BIRHEN NG MANAOG
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4 CONSTANTINE
5 BUKID AY BASA 2
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3 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
4 INFECTION
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6 MEET THE FOCKERS

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4 Hostage	2 Bukid Ay Basa	2 Reserved
5 Bukid Ay Basa	3 Constantine	
	4 Let The Love Begin	
	5 Hostage	
	6 Birhen Ng Manaoag	

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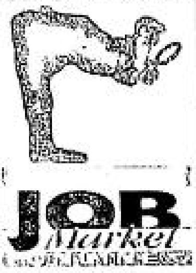

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OPENS MARCH 16

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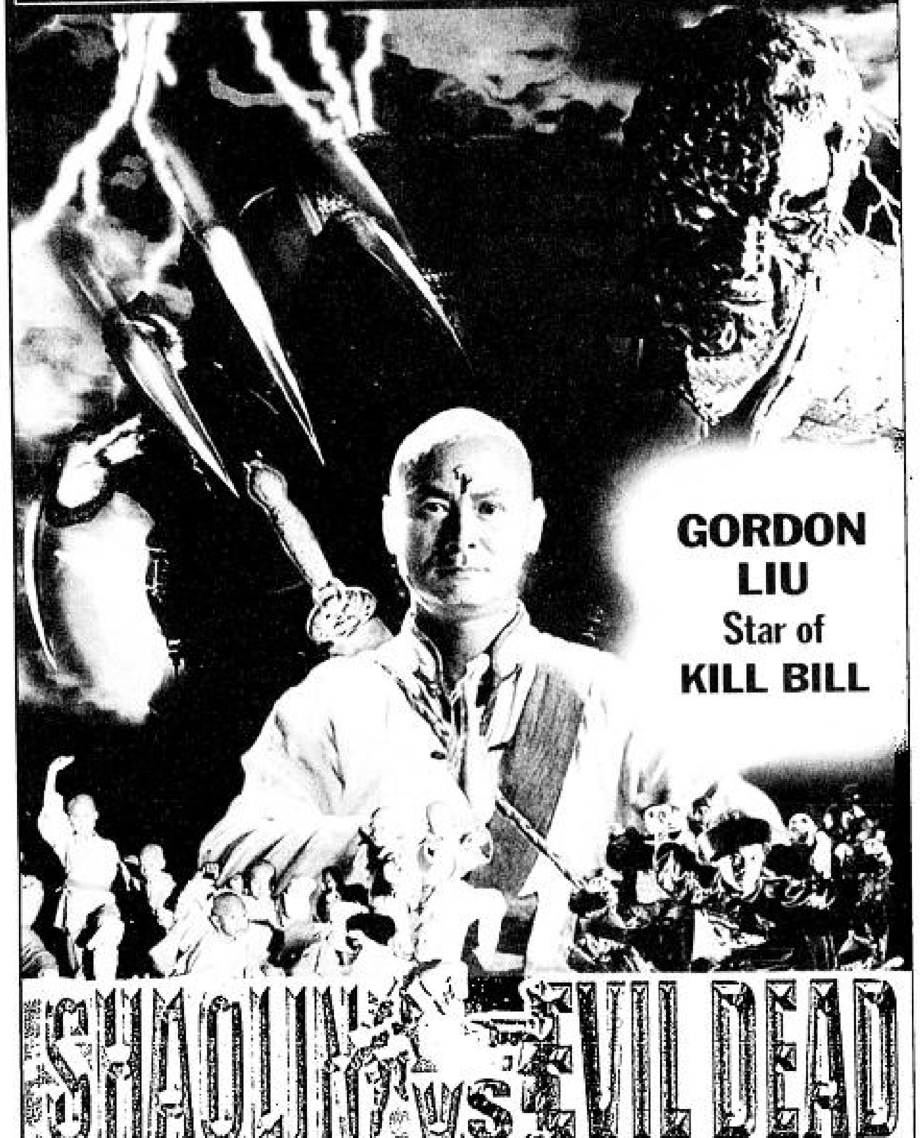

The battle between two Taoist Masters awakens the King of Vampire

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Glenn Kenny / Premiere Magazine

Best Director CLINT EASTWOOD
"Clint Eastwood is doing the best, most assured work of his career. In his clean, unhurried, unblinking fashion, Eastwood takes the audience to raw, profoundly moving places."
DAVID ANSEN / NEWSWEEK

Best Actress HILARY SWANK
"Swank's Maggie has a feral intensity that combines with a heartbreaking eagerness and a megawatt smile to devastating effect. She is not an actress for surfacey roles. Her gift is bringing complete believability to the most extreme, most willful and passionate of characters."
KENNETH TURAN / LOS ANGELES TIMES

Best Supporting Actor MORGAN FREEMAN
"You virtually only have to type Morgan Freeman's name and the phrase 'remarkable performance' nearly follows automatically. Freeman doesn't play a part so much as inhabit it."
HENRY SHEEHAN / KCET-TV

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

FOUR BIG TIME SWINDLERS. WHO WILL OUTSMART WHOM?

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RACHEL WEISZ
ANDY GARCIA
AND
DUSTIN HOFFMAN

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THE LAW

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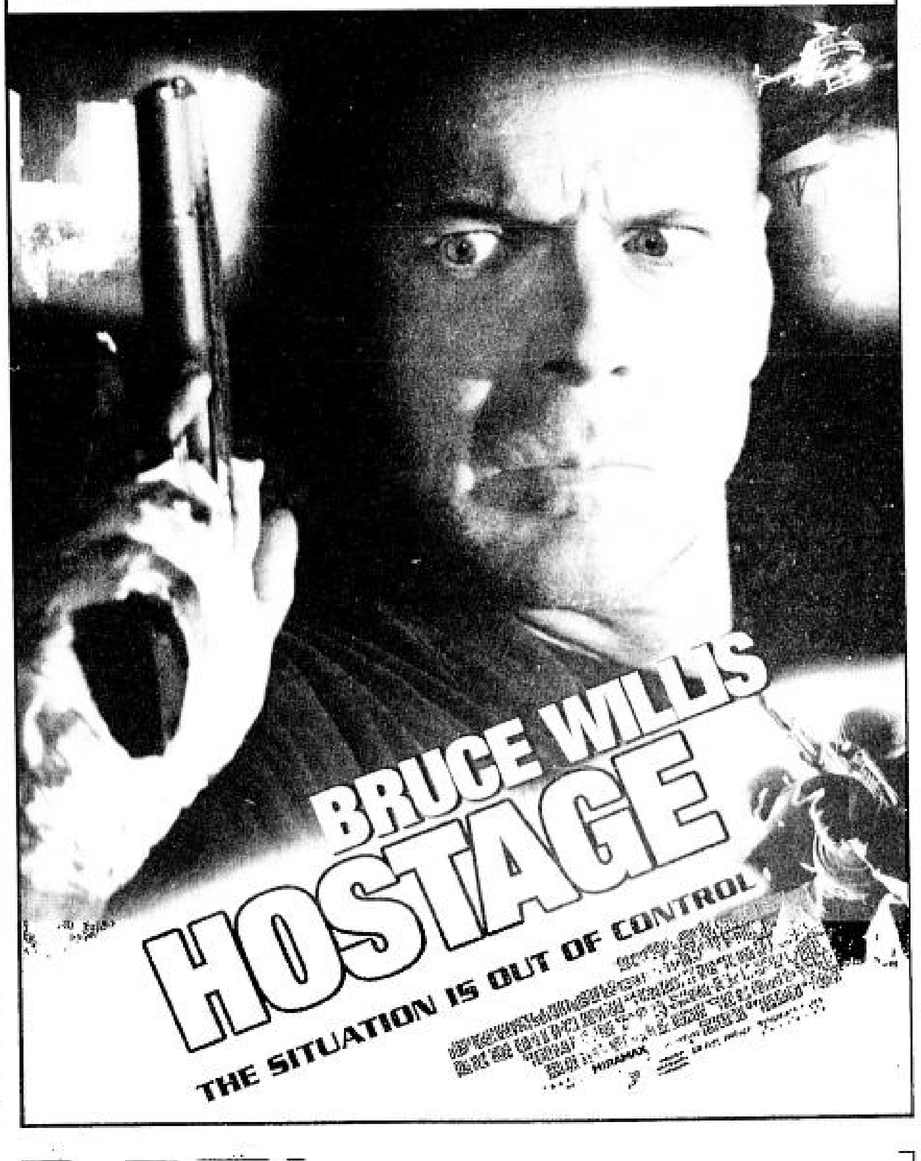
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Norah Jones in Manila

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CAYABYAB. Fresh takes on romantic music.

MONTAGE

'Playing Maestro Ryan'

Get a 10-percent discount on tickets to Ballét Philippine's "Neo-Filipino: Playing Maestro Ryan" with every purchase of specially marked CDs of the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra and the San Miguel Master Chorale ("The Sacred Works of Ryan Cayabyab," "Great Filipino Love Songs" and "Great Original Pilipino Music").

"Playing Maestro Ryan" will have a performance at 8 p.m. today at the CCP. Arnel Feliciano will conduct the SMPO in playing Cayabyab's fresh takes on romantic music. The dances are choreographed by Tony Fabella, Alden Lugnasin, Christine Crame, Irish Abejero, Novy Bereber and Bam Damian.

'After the Cross'

At 7 p.m. today at La Salle Greenhills' St. Joseph's Theater, the Holy Family Musical Theater Ministry presents "After the Cross: A Musical of Hope." The contemporary gospel musical brings hope by remembering the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The musical by Gene Lopez features May Bayot, and is presented by Silverde Foundation for the benefit of Gawad Kalinga and the La Salle Greenhills Adult Night High School. Call 914-4546, 0917 813-2130 or email holyfamily@made2heaven.com.

Solo recital

Baritone Noel Azcona will be heard in his first solo recital in Cagayan Valley today, at the Mother Madeleine Hall, St. Paul University, in Tuguegarao City. The recital will star the Best of the Philippines Concert Tour, to be participated in by some of the country's outstanding classical musicians. Call 901-7156.

Movies on TV

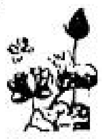
On HBO, March 12 at 7:30 a.m., "Soapdish." 12:30 p.m., "Tears of the Sun." March 13 at 2:05 p.m., "The Hollow." March 14 at 10:30 p.m., "Live from Baghdad." March 15 at 6:45 p.m., "LOTR: The Return of the King." March 16 at 4:20 p.m., "My House in Umbria." 6:05 p.m., "LOTR: The Two Towers."

On Cinemax, March 12 at 3:45 p.m., "Billy Madison." 7 p.m., "The Bourne Identity." March 13 at 6 a.m., "East of Eden." 1:15 p.m., "Unforgiven." 3:20 p.m., "True Crime." March 14 at 9 a.m., "Thoroughly Modern Millie." 9 p.m., "Flashdance." March 15 at 10 a.m., "Batteries Not Included." March 16 at 11:30 a.m., "The Hunt for the Red October."

Web of life

HOW do we treat animals and plants on this planet? Do we merely see them as objects of human consumption and exploitation? The manner in which we relate to them determines our destiny and affects our future on the planet.

LOTUS POND



R. Valencia and S. Bismark

This is the central message of the great Indian chief by the name of Seattle. His thought-provoking insights are contained in John Robbins' book, "A Diet for a New America."

Words of wisdom

When asked by the President of the United States to turn over Indian lands to the white people, Seattle expressed serious

WEB/ A2-2

2ND 'ROMANTIC COMEDY' WEEK!
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Offbeat roles for Williams, Diesel, Thurman

By Nestor U. Torre

THURMAN. Great rapport with John Travolta.

ROBIN Williams has become a big star due to his prodigious, "crazy" comedic talent. From time to time, however, he digs deeper into his bag of skills and comes up with a disturbing dramatic performance that powerfully affirms his versatility as a performer.

Williams' latest dramatic outing is in fact a sci-fi thriller, "The Final Cut," in which he plays a "master cutter" with a very unusual job:

In the world of the future, the most popular gadget for rich people is a chip that's implanted in the brain of a newborn baby. The device records everything that happens in his life. After his death, this footage is edited into a film by the master cutter, who edits out unpleasant memories that would disturb the film bio subject's family.

Life without emotion

So far, so safe. Trouble is, the cutter's talent for viewing life without emotion has made a cold, distant man who's unable to live his own life honestly and fully.

His moment of truth comes when he discovers an image from his own childhood that has haunted him his entire life. This discovery leads him on an urgent search for truth and redemption.

Meanwhile, maverick Korean film director Ahn Byung-ki has followed up on past hit chillers like "Nightmare" and "The Phone" with "Ouija Board: Bushinsaba." The new movie tells the scary tale of a curse that threatens the lives of high school students in a small Korean village.

For his part, Vin Diesel is starring in the family-action-comedy, "The Pacifier," a radical change of pace for the beefy action star. But, the gamble has paid off, because the film topped the US box office on its opening weekend.

Challenge

In "Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous," Sandra Bullock's character faces a new challenge: The FBI agent is now doing PR work for the Agency, so she has to keep her cool—but when her best friend, the reigning Ms United States, is kidnapped in Las Vegas, she has to get involved in her rescue.

Finally, Uma Thurman teams up again with John Travolta in "Be Cool." This time around, Travolta's character Chili Palmer has gone into the music business.

Tangling with Russian mobsters and gangsta rappers, he still finds the time and energy to take a feisty young singer under his wing. From an Aerosmith concert to the MTV Music Awards, he uses his signature combination of wiseguy skills and negotiation tactics to make things go his way.

Uma also has her hands full as Edie, a ditzy woman trying to make it in the music scene. Her performance sparkles, especially in her scenes with Travolta, with whom she enjoys great thespic rapport.

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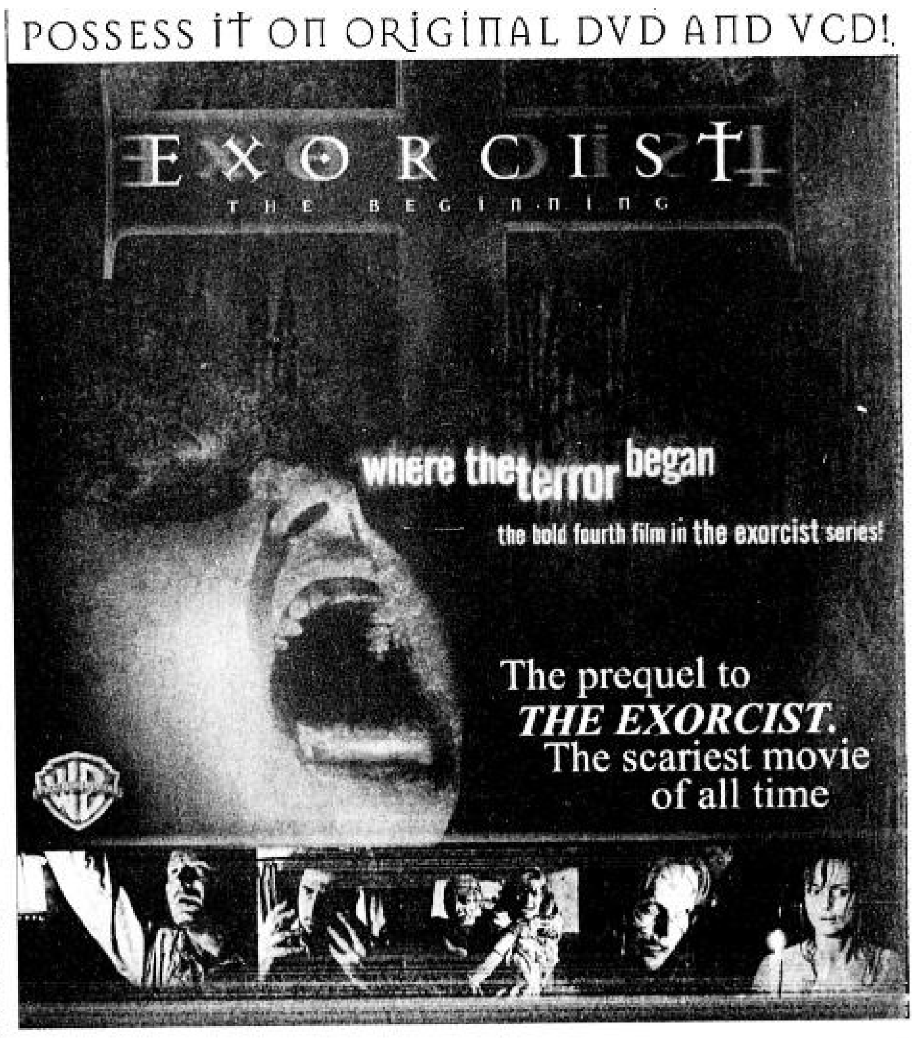
- Shawn Edwards, FOX-TV
"IT'S A SMART RIDE. THERE'S BOTH EYE AND MIND CANDY IN THIS CLEVERLY BERSERK SPAWN OF 'BLADE RUNNER.'"
- Richard Corliss, TIME MAGAZINE
"AN AMAZINGLY ORIGINAL THRILL RIDE."
- Greg Russell, WDWB-TV
KEANU REEVES
CONSTANTINE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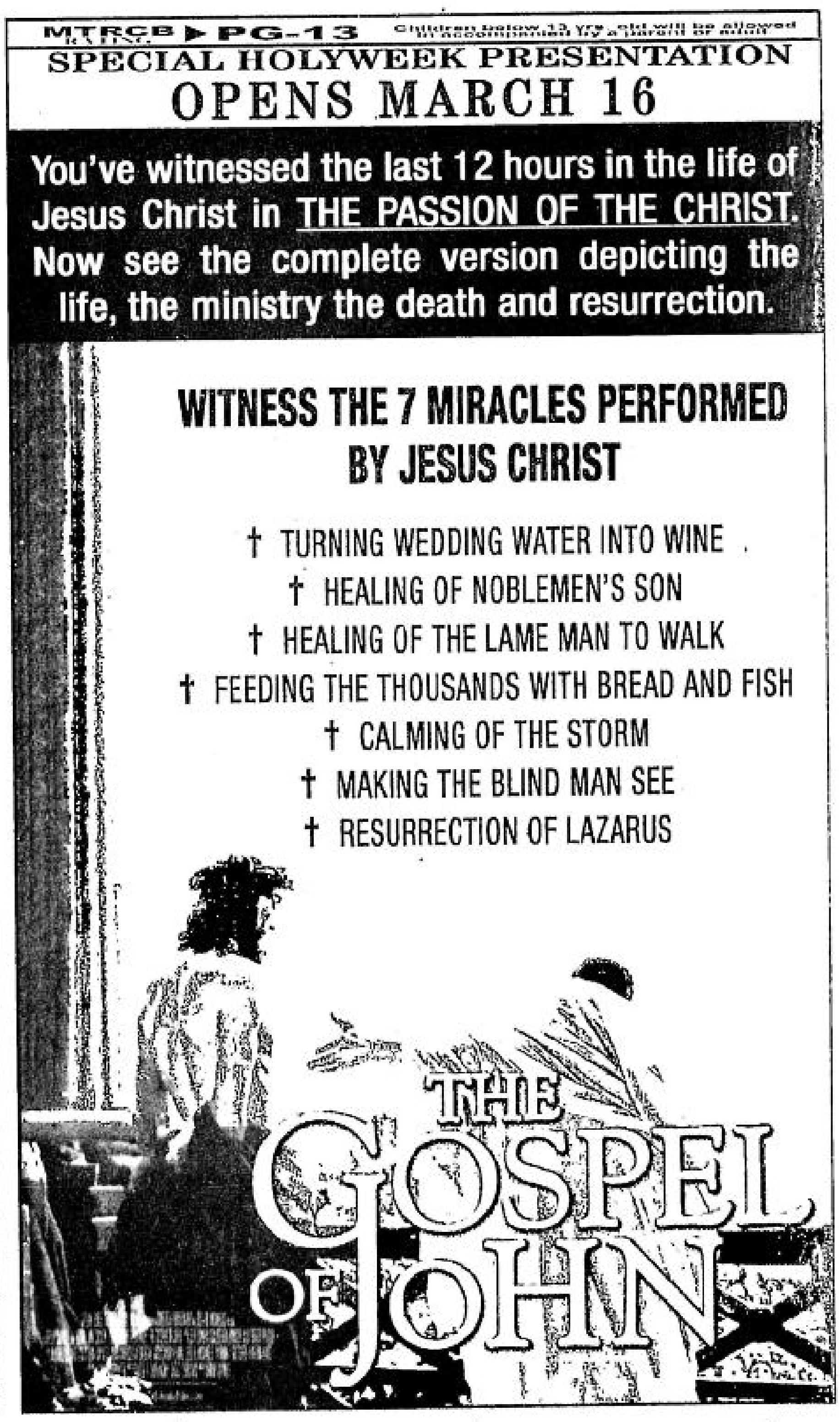
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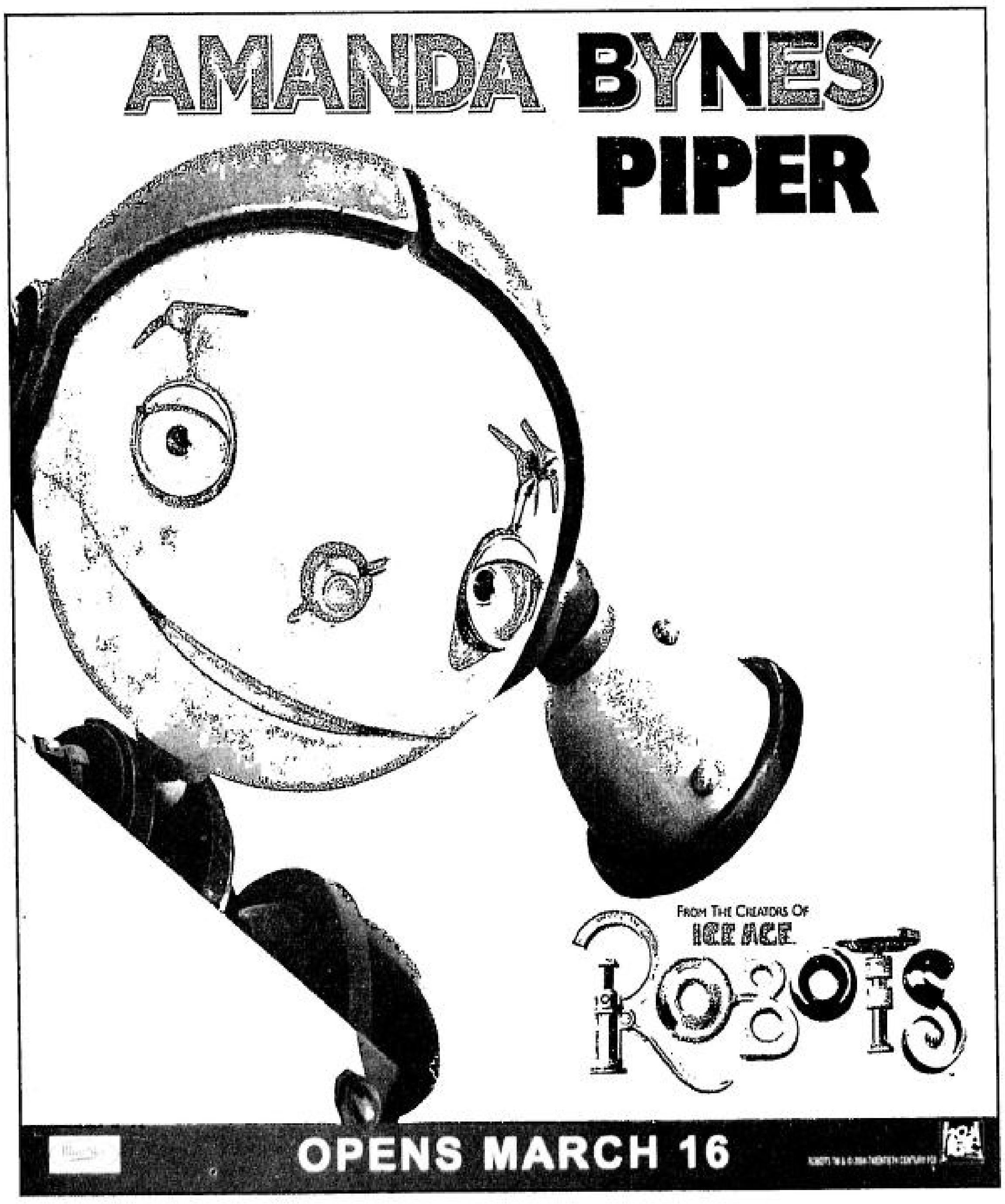
† HEALING OF THE LAME MAN TO WALK
† FEEDING THE THOUSANDS WITH BREAD AND FISH
† CALMING OF THE STORM
† MAKING THE BLIND MAN SEE
† RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS
THE GOSPEL OF JOHN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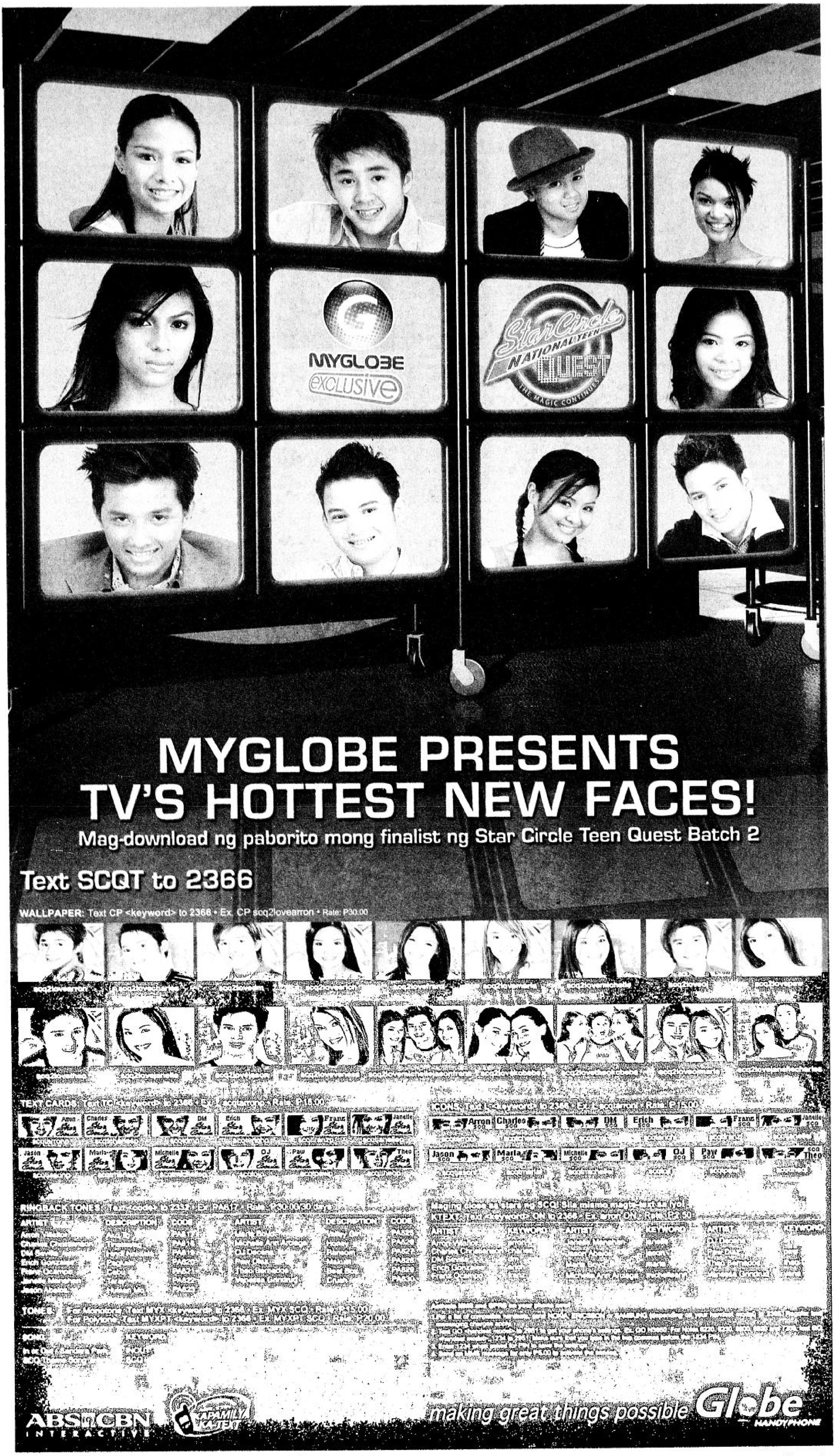
PIPER
FROM THE CREATORS OF ICE AGE
ROBOTS
OPENS MARCH 16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Editor **Raul O. Marcelo**
Assistant Editor **Corrie S. Narisma**

DOF plans sale of golf course, NIMH lot

By Michelle V. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance said it would push for the sale of a 40-hectare property of the National Institute for Mental Health in Mandaluyong and the 25-ha Veterans Memorial Medical Center golf course in Quezon City under its renewed privatization efforts to raise additional revenue for the government.

"These are two strategically located pieces of real estate that are not properly utilized. If sold, we can use the proceeds for various projects, like building more roads," Purisima said before members of the Chamber of Thrift Banks during a convention yesterday.

He said the government could generate a substantial amount from selling the 40-hectare property in the compound of the mental hospital. He is confident the property will attract buyers because it is located near business districts.

On the Veterans golf course, Purisima said the government had no business running it, and should stop spending about P25 million a month for its maintenance.

PURISIMA

Purisima, who said the DOF would take on the revenue-raising strategy of selling state assets, said earnings from the privatization efforts would be used to perk up the government's expenditure program.

The finance chief said the DOF's renewed campaign would be backed by a Malacañang order directing all government agencies to make an inventory of all their assets and identify which assets can be privatized. The order is expected to be issued soon.

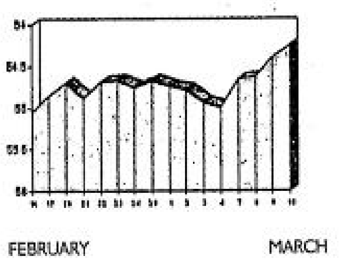
The DOF will create a team that will be tasked to pursue the government's privatization program. A new finance undersecretary, Jay Singson, was tapped to head the DOF's privatization team.

DOF/B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



P 54.13 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., March 11, 2005

¥ 104.11 = $ 1
As of 5 p.m., March 11, 2005

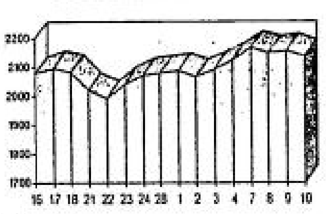
GOLD: $441.10-441.60
per ounce Hong Kong, March 11, 2005

March 11, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.745268	1.000000	54.2210
Japan	Yen	0.007161	0.009608	0.5210
United Kingdom	Pound	1.432628	1.922300	104.2290
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.095560	0.128222	6.9523
Switzerland	Franc	0.645868	0.866626	46.9893
Canada	Dollar	0.618736	0.830220	45.0154
Singapore	Dollar	0.460440	0.617818	33.4987
Australia	Dollar	0.587565	0.788395	42.7476
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.976889	2.652590	143.8261
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.198738	0.266667	14.4590
Brunei	Dollar	0.459021	0.615915	33.3955
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000107	0.0058
Thailand	Baht	0.019474	0.026130	1.4168
UAE	Dirham	0.202921	0.272279	14.7632
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.341800	72.7537
Argentina	Peso	0.254358	0.341297	18.5055
Brazil	Real	0.273111	0.366461	19.8699
Denmark	Kroner	0.134282	0.180180	9.7695
India	Rupee	0.017140	0.022999	1.2470
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.196149	0.263193	14.2706
Mexico	New Peso	0.067588	0.090689	4.9172
New Zealand	Dollar	0.549405	0.737191	39.9712
Norway	Kroner	0.122255	0.164042	8.8945
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012560	0.016853	0.9138
South Africa	Rand	0.127640	0.171268	9.2863
Korea	Won	0.000745	0.001000	0.0542
Sweden	Kroner	0.110224	0.147898	8.0192
Syria	Pound	0.014357	0.019264	1.0445
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024315	0.032626	1.7690
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000347	0.000466	0.0253

STOCK MARKET

Philippine shares close flat

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARE prices closed flat, falling by less than a point Friday as the market consolidated further, dealers said.

They said investors largely ignored the double-digit growth in January exports as well as the peso's rise to a 19-month high against the dollar, but continued to cash-in gains to pay for another major initial public offering.

SM Investments, the holding company of local shopping mall king Henry Sy, will offer to the public between 56.25 million and 105 million shares at a primary offering set to run from Friday until March 17.

Dealers said the market remained at an overbought level following recent sharp gains that brought the index to a five-year high, and expected a correction to occur next week.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index slipped 0.03 points to 2,137.39. It traded between 2,135.44 and 2,141.70.

Turnover reached 1.46 billion shares worth P1.1 billion. The broader all-shares index gained 2.23 points to 1,231.57.

Gainers beat losers 54 to 27, with 66 stocks unchanged.

"We're seeing the initial phases of a correction. We've been up since January and this is one of those minor corrections along the way," Citiseconline.com analyst Mark Alan Canizares said.

Investors were waiting for share prices to fall some more before resuming their buying spree, he added.

"Market outlook remains bullish but the composite index needs to consolidate the gains it made," brokerage BPI Securities said in a note to investors, adding that they should take the market's weakness as an opportunity to establish new positions.

AFP

VAT measure seen jacking up 'texting' rate

A SENATE proposal which, in effect, seeks to advance the payment of value-added tax by phone companies and delay the crediting of their input VAT will raise tax messaging rates, said Albay Rep. Joey Salceda.

The measure aims to tighten the collection of VAT from phone firms by disallowing them to credit their input VAT yearly. Under the proposal, phone firms will be allowed to deduct their VAT inputs from their VAT payment only every five years.

Salceda said such move could jack up the rates by about 12 centavos per text sent.

Salceda warned that the Senate proposal, aimed at raising about P23 billion in additional revenue, would be an added burden to the "texting" public.

The text messaging rate at P1 per message has not been changed since 1995.

Proposals to impose tax of between 5 and 20 centavos per message had been strongly opposed by phone companies and the consumers. It was estimated that the country's more than 33 million mobile phone subscribers send more than 100,000 messages daily.

"Since the tax on text was too unpopular, the Senate is surreptitiously resurrecting the tax on text through this new scheme. This is principal burden to be born by the telecom industry that could result in a 12-centavo increase in the price of text messaging," said Salceda in a statement.

He said text messaging accounts for 80 percent of the revenue of the telecom industry.

Telecom players are presently able to reduce their VAT payments yearly due to their huge input VAT arising from their massive capital investments.

The solon said because of this, the phone companies were able to keep the price of text messaging unchanged at P1 in the last 10 years.

Salceda said the proposal was essentially a borrowing measure

VAT/B2

DOE awards 6th oil, gas exploration contract

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy has awarded to a group composed of Australia's Ottoman Energy Ltd., AustralAsian Energy Limited and RGA Resources Inc. a service contract for oil and gas exploration in northwest Palawan.

The group will undertake the exploration for seven years and is expected to infuse into the project $10.2 million in investments.

Service Contract No. 50, signed by the DOE and the consortium, was the sixth to be awarded since the Supreme Court's December ruling that allowed foreign businesses to invest in mining and petroleum exploration projects in the country.

The contract covers 172,000 hectares in northwest Palawan basin and hosts the so-called the South Calauit oil fields, which contain existing proven oil reserves.

A production test conducted in 1997 showed water-free production of 6,500 barrels of oil per day, but the complete exploration and production of the field was later stopped due to the presence of water, the energy department said.

The DOE said Australia's Ottoman has exploration activities in the Thrace Basin of Turkey, while AustralAsian is a wholly owned unit of Middle East Petroleum Services Ltd.

RGA Resources is a local company that was organized to provide technical and management services to the consortium.

Peso hits new 20-mo high

THE PESO yesterday closed at a new 20-month high of 54.13:$1 on the back of strong foreign portfolio inflow to the stock market.

Gaining by another 12 centavos from Thursday's finish of 54.25, yesterday's close was strongest since July 25, 2003 when it closed at 54.10:$1.

The peso has had a series of fresh 20-year highs over the last three days, benefiting from the market's excitement over the initial public offerings of SM Investments Corp. of retail tycoon Henry Sy and the Ayalas' Manila Water Co.

The 54.10:$1 support was hit during the intra-day trading as bullish sentiment on these big IPOs attracted strong foreign investor interest.

SMIC's public offering is expected to generate $500 mil li-

PESO/B2

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* Based on R.L. Polk statistics purchase numbers from 1991-2004
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• METRO MANILA: Ford Alabang, Trunk Line: 842-3681; Fax: 807-4430 • Ford Balintawak, Trunk Line: 927-9648; Fax: 927-5981 • Ford Commonwealth, Trunk Lines: 952-9118 / 952-9446; Fax: 952-9440 • Ford EDSA, Trunk Line: 744 2222; Fax: 723-6311 • Ford EDSA Service Center, Tel. No.: 726-7181 • Ford Libis, Trunk Line: 637-2044; Fax. 637 6008 • Ford Makati, Trunk Line: 818 5555; Fax: 818-0513 • Ford Manila, Trunk Line: 562-5555; Fax: 562-8985 • Ford Quezon Ave., Trunk Line: 742-3435; Fax: 742-3540 • Ford Shaw Blvd., Trunk Lines: 717-0888; Fax: 717-1390 • LUZON: Ford Cabanatuan, Trunk Line: (044)463-9660; Fax: (044)600-4200 • Ford Cavite, Trunk Line: (046)472-2040; Fax. (046)472-2048 • Ford Dagupan, Trunk Line: (075)522-2222, Fax: (075)515-5520 • Ford Pampanga, Trunk Lines: (045)963-5202 / (045)961-2888; Fax. (045)963-5205 • Ford San Pablo, Trunk Line: (049)562-8324 • VISAYAS: Ford Bacolod, Trunk Line: (034)432-2151; Fax: (034)434-2877 • Ford Cebu, Trunk Line: (032)231-9180; Fax: (032)231-9023 • Ford Iloilo, Trunk Line: (033)321-3351; Fax: (033)321-3352 • MINDANAO: Ford Cagayan de Oro, Trunk Line: (088)855-8811; Fax: (088)855-8877 • Ford Davao, Trunk Line: (082)234-1111; Fax: (082)234-2222

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Nothing but the throat

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

IT is about time (exactly 2:25 p.m.) that you do your duty as law-abiding tax-paying citizens of this Republic, and write letters of praise to Congress.

In an amazing gesture of self-sacrifice never before seen in the annals of amazing official gestures, members of Congress were able to set aside their personal interests.

Based on reports reaching Malacañang via terrible roads, our lawmakers avoided shooting each other over issues of national importance such as ... well, their pork.

So whatever you do, get ready for the Holy Week and all, but please, find the time to congratulate your congressman.

Also, don't get sick! Or become a victim of terrorist attacks! These are both unproductive undertakings.

* * *

ONLY recently, I made the mistake of getting sick. With fever running up to the temperature of a pizza oven, I went to this brand-new, sparkling classy hospital.

I have close friends and even closer relatives in the medical profession, and they pleaded with me to take a blood test.

You see, I've been out of school for more than 30 years now, but I still get a shiver up my spine at the mere mention of the word "test."

But off to the hospital I went, and since I was feeling terrible, the hospital staff gave me very special attention by making me wait for more than two hours.

It was a Sunday, unfortunately, and the hospital staff informed me that they were doing everything medically possible to find somebody to get my blood sample.

After another blood text, this time in another hospital, with the entire procedure taking only 15 minutes, I found out I had the dreaded dengue.

* * *

THAT'S why I must tell you nothing but the truth. Do whatever you want, but just don't get sick. For to get sick nowadays, really, is a big mistake.

A lady friend of mine made the same terrible mistake of getting sick with dengue. She has been confined at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center for several days now, and all of us, her friends, have been storming heaven for her recovery.

We all lined up to donate the blood for transfusion. The hospital staff were so efficient, they took blood from everybody who volunteered. Then they told us much later, after the procedure, that—oops, somehow—we were not qualified as blood donors.

So why, in the first place, did they have to do the procedure? After all, medical procedures really cost a lot of money nowadays.

And none of us dared to complain, for fear that we would also be called a "malcontent" in some column items, in another newspaper, for complaining about lousy service.

* * *

EVER since my high school days, I have always admired CSMC, if only for its name at that time.

Well, the hospital was named after the late and well-loved Archbishop of Manila, Rufino Cardinal Santos. I got a high school scholarship from the good cardinal at the archdiocese seminary in Makati.

Recently, my admiration for CSMC grew even more upon my reading its paid advertisement in a newspaper.

The ad announced that CSMC was the first "tertiary medical center" in this country "to house all diagnostic and therapeutic equipment under one complex." Wow! It sounded like salvation to me.

The ad was talking about the big "C"—you know, cancer. I have the dreaded disease in my blood. My father, his brother, and their father all died of cancer. This is one ad, I told myself, that I must clip.

The ad talked about equipment whose names I could not even pronounce, probably some hi-tech advance facilities that have never been seen, or heard about, in this country.

It also sounded expensive, something that they can get you by the throat.

Well, the CSMC ad talked about its unveiling a "Cancer Center." It sounded so good, I found myself whispering a prayer that I would not find a use for it someday. Who would, right?

* * *

AND so in a casual conversation with those friends of mine in the medical profession (and they don't like the term "health care business"), I learned a thing or two about the nice whole-page CSMC ad.

They told me that I could have all the equipment in the world, but cancer is still cancer, and today, there is still no known surefire cure for it. And so I immediately went to confession.

Anyway, I mentioned confession because, from the ad, I had the impression that CSMC had all it takes to blast the big C into oblivion. It somehow raised my expectations. It could have done the same thing to other people.

Well, we read things in the ad like HDR (high dose rate) Brachytherapy and RFA (Radio Frequency Ablation), which are actually modern weapons against prostate and liver cancer.

My friends even explained to me what the equipment would do to your prostate, something about injecting radioactive materials into your body.

I have news for you—CSMC does not have the equipment!

What it has at the moment, according to some insiders, is only a room that it can convert into a facility for the equipment, if ever it has the plan.

Correct me if I am wrong, but the last time I checked, having extra space for the equipment is not exactly the same as actually having the equipment.

Okay, so the management of CSMC tells everybody that someday, the hospital will have the equipment. And I thought the ad was not talking about mere intent.

It looked to me like an outright claim of the existence of the equipment. I guess hospitals do not have to follow that rule about truth in advertising.

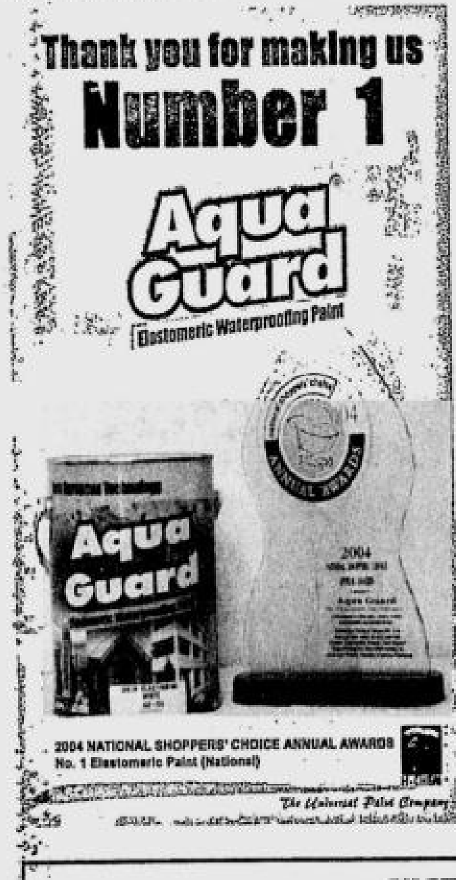
VAT measure seen jacking up 'texting' rate

From page B1

because the government would get have the cash flow in advance from the "uncredited input VAT" for five years at zero interest rate but these would be offset eventually from future tax liabilities.

"For example, in 2003, the output VAT of the telecom industry was P15 billion but its input VAT was P12 billion resulting in a net VAT payable of P3 billion to BIR since they have essentially paid VAT to Customs," the solon explained.

Under the Senate proposal, companies would have to wait for five years before they could credit their input VAT.



2004 NATIONAL SHOPPERS' CHOICE ANNUAL AWARDS
No. 1 Elastomeric Paint (National)
The Universal Paint Company

Peso hits new 20-mo high

From page B1

on.The bulk of the offering is expected to be taken up by foreign investors.

"Most banks are dollar short as they anticipate more inflows coming in the next few weeks," one trader said.

Traders said the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas likely intervened in favor of the US dollar or the peso would have further appreciated.

One trader said the BSP must have bought a total of around $25 million at various rates ranging from P54.10 to P54.17 to the US dollar.

But BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said: "We will let the market seek its own level. We're just making sure that it's not too volatile."

Live in a Resort-Like Garden Community.
A Dream Home within City Limits.
Pasadena Villas
FOR SALE / LEASE!!!
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DOF plans sale of golf course, NIMH lot

From page B1

He said the government had to have more money for vital expenditures, such as infrastructure projects, since additional revenues to be generated from the tax measures were already earmarked by the Arroyo administration for cutting down the budget deficit.

The tax measures include the increase in excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, the lateral attrition measure covering revenue-collecting government agencies, the increase in the value-added tax rate, and the rationalization of fiscal incentives. The first two have already been enacted into law, while the latter are still pending in Congress.

VICTORIAS
MILLING COMPANY, INC.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

TO ALL STOCKHOLDERS:

The Annual Stockholders' Meeting **VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC. ("VMC")** will be held on **Friday, 01 April 2005**, at 9 o'clock in the morning, at **The Metropolitan Club, Inc.**, Estrella corner Amapola Streets, Guadalupe Viejo, Makati City.

The **Agenda** of the meeting will be as follows –

1. Call to Order
2. Certification of Notice to Stockholders and Presence of Quorum:
3. Presentation of the Annual Report
4. Ratification of Acts and Proceedings of the Board of Directors and its Corporate Officers
5. Amendment of the Articles of Incorporation
6. Adoption of New By-Laws
7. Appointment of External Auditors
8. Election of Members of the Board of Directors
9. Other Matters
10. Adjournment

Minutes of the last Regular Stockholders' Meeting and resolutions of the Board of Directors from 1 May, 2004 will be available for examination during office hours at the VMC Makati Office located at 9126 Sultana corner Honradez Streets, Barangay Olympia, Makati City.

All members who will not, are unable to, or do not expect to attend the meeting in person may, at their option, designate their authorized representatives by means of a **PROXY** which should be submitted to Ms. Denia D. Austria at the VMC Makati Office, 9126 Sultana corner Honradez Streets, Barangay Olympia, Makati City, to Atty. Eva A. Vicencio-Rodriguez at VICMICO Compound, Victorias City, Negros Occidental, or to Fidelity Stock Transfers, Inc. at 3-A Vernida I Condominium, 120 Amorsolo Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City, for validation **not later than 5 o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday, 22 March 2005.**

Only stockholders of record as of the close of business hours on **Monday, 7 March 2005** shall be entitled to vote at this meeting.

For your convenience in registering your attendance, please present any form of identification, such as driver's license, passport, voter's I.D., Social Security member card or Taxpayer's Identification Number Card. Your duly designated proxy is required to present a copy of the duly executed proxy form. Registration will start at 7:00 a.m. and will close at 8:30 a.m.

(Sgd.)SANTIAGO T. GABIONZA, JR.
Corporate Secretary

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 11, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	50,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	30	30.5	30	30	356,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	58	58	57.5	58	577,300
China Banking Corp.	690	690	690	690	840
Citystate Savings Bank	17.5	17.5	17.5	17.5	2,500
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	50	50.5	50	50.5	49,600
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.92	0.92	0.9	0.9	2,410,000
International Exch. Bank	19	19	19	19	91,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	36	37	35.5	37	2,279,700
Philippine National Bank	32	32.5	32	32	60,100
Phil. Savings Bank	32.5	32.5	30	30.5	10,400
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	23,800
Security Bank Corp.	31	31	31	31	158,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	31	32	31	32	18,800
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	100,000
First Abacus Financial	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	370,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2550	2555	2550	2555	190
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.1	2.12	2.1	2.12	1,020,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	151	152	151	152	2,100
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1765	1765	1725	1725	430
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	17.75	17.75	17.5	17.5	35,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.52	1.52	1.44	1.44	19,078,000
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	2,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	935	935	930	935	37,210
Ipeople Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	58,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	0.0525	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.065	0.065	0.0625	0.065	4,900,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	70,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.02	2.02	2.02	2.02	1,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.65	3.7	4,499,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1480	1480	1470	1470	120,420
Ivantage Corp.	0.83	0.83	0.81	0.81	2,350,000
Philweb Corp.	0.025	0.025	0.023	0.024	229,200,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	20.5	20.75	20.5	20.75	56,400
Manila Electric Co. B	30.5	30.5	30	30	894,700
Petron Corp.	4.55	4.55	4.35	4.35	5,334,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.46	1.46	1.46	1.46	300,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96	20,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	8.7	8.7	8.6	8.6	289,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc	0.68	0.68	0.63	0.63	250,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	5,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.77	0.79	0.75	0.76	6,530,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.83	100,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.45	4.35	4.4	5,857,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	180,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	15,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	29.5	29.5	29	29.5	118,400
RFM Corp.	0.99	1	0.96	0.99	3,470,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	50,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	56.5	56	56.5	98,700
San Miguel Corp. B	83.5	83.5	83.5	83.5	11,000
Universal Robina Corp.	11.25	12	11.25	12	320,600
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	113,600,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	40,000,000
Ayala Corp.	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.3	7,642,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.68	0.7	0.67	0.67	2,560,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.1	5.2	5	5.1	2,056,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	5,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc	0.0575	0.06	0.055	0.0575	18,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.46	2.46	2.4	2.44	5,186,000
APC Group Inc	0.49	0.52	0.49	0.49	21,070,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.0085	0.008	0.008	83,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	40,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	34,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	22,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	25.5	26	25	25	121,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.195	0.2	7,500,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.36	1.36	1.28	1.3	44,760,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	1,340,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.29	0.3	0.28	0.29	10,630,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.55	0.55	0.5	0.5	2,650,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.7	4.7	4.45	4.5	2,012,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0625	0.0625	0.06	0.06	9,200,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.7	1.78	1.7	1.74	1,168,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	10.5	10.5	10.25	10.25	855,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	60	60	57.5	57.5	888,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.27	0.3	0.27	0.27	920,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.145	0.145	0.135	0.135	44,580,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.88	1.88	1,090,000
Ionics Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.66	1.66	350,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.9	4.25	3.9	4.1	8,449,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.02	2.1	2	2.06	868,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.78	1.78	1.72	1.74	2,110,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.18	0.2	0.18	0.2	500,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	310,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.54	0.57	0.52	0.55	3,450,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.59	0.6	0.59	0.59	24,660,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.42	2.42	2.42	2.42	5,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	110,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.46	1.5	132,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.37	0.39	0.36	0.37	2,080,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	100,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	420,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.58	0.6	0.58	0.58	350,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.45	4.25	3.45	4	283,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.205	0.205	13,250,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.21	3,160,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	1,480,000
Zeus Holdings Inc	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	70,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.64	1.66	1.6	1.6	133,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.89	0.95	0.89	0.95	590,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.155	0.155	9,490,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	100,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.66	1.66	1.58	1.58	3,714,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.26	1.3	1.22	1.22	6,776,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.48	1.52	4,331,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.39	1,950,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	17.25	17.25	16.75	16.75	489,100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	200
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.5	9.5	9.3	9.3	3,809,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.43	20,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	48,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.04	1,843,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	2,530,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.38	0.38	0.35	0.35	15,620,000
Eib Realty Developers Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	220,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.61	0.62	0.58	0.58	18,360,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	5,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	2.06	2.06	1.98	2	3,790,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	400,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.75	2.75	2.5	2.5	61,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.34	0.36	0.33	0.33	28,150,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.76	0.78	0.76	0.78	730,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.25	0.25	4,870,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.85	4.4	3.85	4.4	1,612,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,850,000
SM Development Corp.	1.84	1.86	1.84	1.84	310,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	9.1	9.1	8.7	8.8	4,920,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1	1.02	1	1.02	125,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	1,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	86,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6	6.1	5.9	6.1	109,000
Benguet Corp A	8	8	8	8	9,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.4	5,370,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.44	0.44	0.42	0.43	12,090,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.02	0.019	0.019	20,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.027	29,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.0095	0.0005	0.0085	0095	1,342,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.22	1.22	1.18	1.22	1,108,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.48	1.5	1.46	1.46	4,420,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	45.5	46.5	45.5	46	1,934,300
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.31	290,000
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0065	0.0065	0.006	0.006	25,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	3,000,000
Oriental Pet & Min. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	51,000,000
Oriental Pet & Min. B	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	78,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.38	770,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	180,000
Pacifica	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	17,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3	3	2.9	2.9	4,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.235	0.235	0.225	0.23	2,390,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.39	210,000

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Alabang:304Home precinct,FilinvestAve,West Gate

DISCLOSURES

SM Prime Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 25, 3 p.m. at the Rizal Ballroom of Shangri-La Makati Hotel. Stockholders of record as of March 28 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

* * *

MANILA Mining Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 18, 10 a.m. at the Penthouse of Lepanto Building, Makati City.

* * *

SM Development Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 26, 4 p.m. at the Manila A & B Room of Makati Shangri-La Hotel

* * *

INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. will appeal the decision of Securities and Exchange Commission to fine the company for late disclosure of its plans to convert its advances to two wholly owned subsidiaries into preferred shares and deposit.

* * *

GABRIEL Singson Jr. resigned as director of **Pancake House Inc.**

Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

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SMART SCHOOL PROGRAM
Manuel Pangilinan (seated), chair of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and Smart Communications, tries a computer at the Smart Teacher Learning Resource Center during its turn-over and inauguration at Science and Technological Education Center in Lapu-Lapu City.
CDN PHOTO

FUNDING EXPANSION

Zesto plans to go public

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ZESTO Corp., one of the leading beverage companies in the country, has joined the list of companies that are planning to hold initial public offerings this year.

Zesto chair Alfredo Yao said the company was looking at raising more than P1 billion from the planned public offering this year to help it fund overseas expansion plans.

"It looks like the market and the economy is looking good," Yao told the INQUIRER in an interview.

He said Zesto might list on the exchange this year and sell between 20 percent and 30 percent of the beverage firm to the public.

Yao recently met with Philippine Stock Exchange officials to inquire on the requirements on companies that plan to hold their IPOs.

Zesto is currently controlled by Yao, who also owns manufacturing firm Harman Foods, which produces fruit purees.

Zesto, which recently bought into RC Cola, is bringing its softdrinks line to China.

Zesto operates three softdrinks producing plants for RC Cola in Antipolo, Quezon City and Canlubang.

It has plans of introducing in brand to China.

Zesto, which is a leading brand in ready-to-drink fruit juices also sells instant noodles, milk, table sauces, instant tea, purees and carbonated drinks.

It was founded in May 1981.

The market is awaiting the offering of taipan Henry Sy's holding firm, SM Investments Corp. (SMIC) and Ayala-led Manila Water Co. Inc. slated for this month.

SMIC is raising some P29 billion or roughly $530 million from the stock market with an offering of 115 million shares.

Manila Water, for its part, expects to raise $97.8 million from its initial public offering (IPO) of 745.33 million common shares, which will close on March 18.

Other companies which are also keen to list in the stock market in the near-term include First Generation Holdings Corp. of the Lopez Group, and energy firm Mirant Global.

Last year, only International Exchange Bank braved the market by holding its IPO.

Partial log ban lifting saves wood industry

By Abigail L. Ho

THE RECENT lifting of the ban on legitimate logging operations in Mindanao effectively prevented the loss of P20 billion in investments and two million jobs in the logging industry, an industry group said.

Philippine Wood Producers Association president Antonio Olizon said it took much political will on the part of President Macapagal-Arroyo to lift the ban.

"The partial lifting has removed the risk of totally losing the export market for high-value finished wood products estimated at P21 billion yearly," he said in a statement.

He added that Ms Arroyo could not have made the decision at a better time as the country was currently in no position to import its wood requirements, worth approximately P28 billion a year.

The continued ban on legitimate logging operations in some parts of Mindanao, he said, would result in the loss of P20 billion worth of investments in upstream and downstream wood-based industries.

"It has also averted the growing restlessness in the countryside among small tree farmers in public lands who cannot harvest the trees they planted based on the law [Presidential Decree 1559]," he said.

PD 1559 is the decree that amended the Forestry Code of the Philippines.

For his part, Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay said imposing a ban even on legitimate logging operations would do nothing to help the local wood industry. He said it might even hurt other industries in the long run.

"There's always a way to balance ecology and the exploitation of our natural resources," he said in a telephone interview.

A proper compromise, he said, would be to rationalize the issuance of logging permits.

Smaller logging operators, he said, would not usually bother to reforest after they had cleared of trees the areas that they had been allowed to operate in.

Gov't wants alien ID project fast-tracked

THE P150-MILLION build-operate-transfer (BOT) alien registration and documentation project is set to go nationwide soon in line with commitments to the influential Joint Foreign Chambers (JFC), the Bureau of Immigration said.

Immigration Commissioner Arthel Caronongan said the bureau had already instructed the BOT proponent to hasten the expansion of the facilities of the Alien Certificate of Registration Identification Card (ACR I-Card) System in seven international airports and one international seaport in the country, as well as in 12 BI district port offices.

The JFC earlier called on the government to "ensure the speedy nationwide implementation" of the ACR I-Card project in a bid to provide convenience to some 87,500 legal aliens in the country.

Economic planning Secretary Romulo Neri said the project was expected to raise P1.5 billion in revenue for the government in the next 10 years, and was being done without government guarantee.

According to Caronongan, the nationwide implementation of the ACR I-Card project "is part of the BOT proponent's commitment to make the registration process convenient to the expatriate community."

The district offices are in La Union, Aparri, Subic and Angeles, Batangas, Legaspi, Iloilo, Cebu, Tacloban, Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro, Surigao and Davao.

Development of local bond market pushed

DEUTSCHE Bank said it was strongly supporting recent government efforts to develop a more robust local bond market, saying the timing was right given a strong interest in Philippine debt paper in the offshore market.

Martin Hohensee, head of Asian fixed income and credit research at Deutsche Bank, said the development of a strong peso-denominated debt capital market would help mitigate currency risk and reduce financing costs in the medium term.

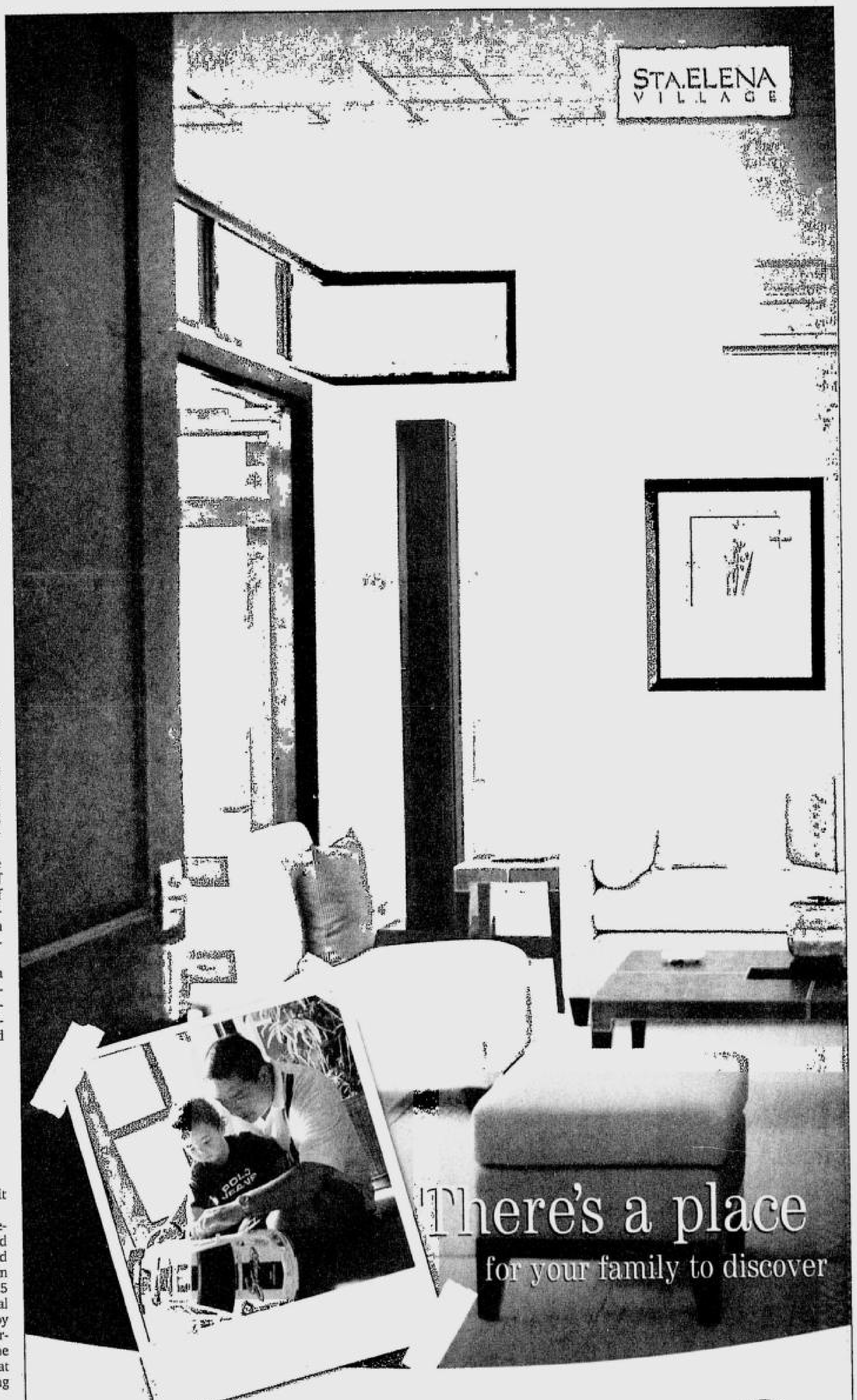
"A deep and liquid domestic bond market is critical to a healthy financial system as it reduces the associated currency risk of offshore issues, develops a platform for risk management and interest rate hedging, and helps to allocate resources efficiently among the government, corporations and financial institutions," Hohensee said.

"The development of a fixed income exchange, and more significantly, a bond switch auction program—designed to replace small illiquid issues with larger liquid ones—could have a substantial positive impact on debt dynamics and offshore credit spreads," he noted.

Deutsche Bank believes the development of the onshore bond market is a natural step forward from the active offshore sovereign market which attracted over $3.5 billion in the eight international bond transactions entered into by the Philippines in 2004. This interest continued in 2005, with the $1.5-billion 25-year sovereign float in January being met with strong investor interest.

Deutsche Bank helped arrange a number of these transactions. "The latest Republic of the Philippines bond was very well received—it was the longest-dated and largest Philippine sovereign ever issued," Mark Leahy, head of debt syndicate at Deutsche Bank, said.

"Deutsche Bank is committed to actively partnering with the government and other industry players to ensure that the capital markets in the Philippines are further developed to support the country's economic growth," said Enrico Cruz, chief country officer of Deutsche Bank in the Philippines.



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BPI FSB gives exclusive treat to Brokers Circle

AS A way to show appreciation to its accredited set of brokers, BPI Family Savings Bank hosted an exclusive gathering to affirm their valuable partnership and to unveil BPI's latest incentive program.

Pasig's Astoria Plaza bore witness to an evening of fun and surprises that served as BPI's special treat to the approximately 180 accredited brokers present during the event. No less than top BPI Executives like housing loan division vice president Albert Pascual, broker/developer department AVP Ruel Magtoto and BPI Family Savings Bank president Alfonso Salcedo, Jr. welcomed the esteemed partner brokers and awarded the top achievers of the previous year.

An array of coveted prizes was raffled off during the event and brought home by lucky members of the audience. Lucky broker Arnel Cruzado won a Sony Digital Camera whereas, Jhonilo Dorado received an all-leather portfolio bag. Jeanne Red, Rolando Macasiab and Catherine Coniega were also among the fortunate ones who got a Nokia Cellphone, a Canon Digital Camera and A Sony Ericsson Cellphone respectively.

But the big winner for the night was broker Josephine Gaston. For 2004's last quarter alone, she was proclaimed Quarterly (Q4 2004) Top Performer and received a Sony Ericsson Cellphone as her quarterly draw guaranteed prize. Aside from this, she was also was adjudged Top Performer for 2004 by referring more than a million worth of housing loans to BPI, and was much deservingly awarded a trip for two to Melbourne, Australia.

Gretel Martinez, product manager for BPI Housing Loan, gave the brokers a glimpse of the fabulous prizes that await them for this year. Under the 2005 Ultimate Rewards incentive program, top performers get a chance to be awarded a free trip to Hong Kong, Hawaii and China, aside from other prizes like cash incentives, gift checks, spa treatments, appliances, furniture, latest gadgets and cellphone units which will be awarded to the brokers for every successful housing loan they refer.

"BPI's Housing Loans Division definitely owes much to its partner brokers, this is the very reason why we came up with the Ultimate Rewards incentive program, to make them feel how much we appreciate their effort and value our continuing partnership with them," says BPI Family Savings Bank president, Alfonso Salcedo, Jr.

To make the evening more memorable for the guests, BPI treated their partner brokers to a succulent dinner prepared especially for them as they were entertained by singer/comedienne Mitch Valdez.

CHARMEE MALL TOUR

The heat is on but Sarah Geronimo and Bea Alonzo , Charmee's product endorsers will continuously cool you as they promote Charmee feminine protection's 2nd leg of their 2005 Charmee Mall Tour. Catch Sarah in her following Charmee mall tour schedules: March 12 at CSI Lucao and April 9 at NCCC Davao. Likewise, catch Bea in her following Charmee mall tour schedules: April 8 at SM Baguio, April 9 at SM Marilao, April 15 at Ever Ortigas, April 16 at Robinsons Metro East, April 23 at Gaisano Bacolod, April 29 at SM North Edsa and April 30 at Robinsons Ermita.

'If you love the Philippines, be a tourist in the Philippines' - Durano

CONVINCED that "to promote local travel, one must inspire pride in being Filipino," the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Smart Communications launched recently the domestic travel advocacy campaign, "I Love Philippines, Biyahe Na!" at the Westin Philippine Plaza.

"We want to encourage Filipinos to explore our country's beautiful sites and reconnect with our heritage, history and culture," Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said during the launching of the tourism advocacy drive.

He added the campaign's theme was so designed to tug at the heart of Filipinos as well as to encourage them to respond to an urgent call to positive action: Be a tourist in your own country.

The tri-media "I Love Philippines, Biyahe Na!" advertising campaign touches on everything Filipinos love about the Philippines-the breathtaking destinations and colorful fiestas, its sumptuous food and unrivalled shopping, and its friendly people and rich culture.

To ensure the campaign's success, Durano said DOT and Smart linked up with other corporate partners, like Jollibee, Pfizer Inc, Pilipinas Shell and Shoemart, who also understand the socioeconomic benefits yielded by tourism.

SECRETARY Durano (third from left) with Regine Velasquez (fourth from left) and the DOT's corporate partners (from left) Ricky Lim of Shoemart, Ed Chua of Pilipinas Shell, Anastacio Martinez of Smart, Ernesto Tanmantiong of Jollibee, Ting Besa of Pfizer, and the composer of the 'Biyahe Na' theme song, Ricardo Nieva.

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
REGIONAL OFFICE NO. VIII
PAWING, PALO, LEYTE
Tel. Nos. (053-323-3075, 323-3084) • Fax No. 053-323-3061

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
FOR GRAINS HANDLING SERVICES FOR NFA, REGION VIII

The National Food Authority, Regional Office VIII, Pawing, Palo, Leyte invites qualified grains cargo handling service contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for provision of handling services in the different NFA utilized warehouses in Region VIII for the Calendar Year 2005 in the following provinces with their Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)

PROVINCE	LOCATION OF WAREHOUSE	EST. VOLUME TO BE HANDLED (BAGS)	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
N. Leyte	Port Area Whse-Tacloban	120,200	P 374,170.00
	Alangalang Whse-Alangalang	380,600	1,393,700.00
	Ormoc Whse-Ormoc City	92,200	292,020.00
So. Leyte	Maasin Whse	114,000	357,740.00
	Baybay Whse	41,400	120,690.00
	Hilongos Whse	2,200	8,370.00
Biliran	Naval Whse	181,200	517,080.00
W. Samar	Catbalogan Whse	294,200	915,120.00
	Calbayog Whse	100,000	311,550.00
N. Samar	Bobon Whse	161,000	506,400.00
	Rawis Whse	120,000	381,300.00
	Catubig Whse	77,300	269,390.00
	Gamay Whse	29,000	89,900.00
E. Samar	Hindang Whse	225,000	701,530.00
	Oras Whse	57,000	178,250.00
	Guiuan Whse	154,800	481,430.00
TOTAL			P 6,909,900.00

The application forms, eligibility requirements and other bid documents shall be obtained from the Regional Bids and Award Committee (RBAC) Secretariat after payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of Three Thousand Pesos Only (P3,000.00)

The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME	VENUE
Issuance of Registration, Eligibility & Bid Documents	March 9-18, 2005	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM	NFA-Reg'l Office 8 Pawing, Palo, Leyte
Deadline for Submission of Required Registration & Eligibility Documents	March 21, 2005	5:00 PM	NFA-Reg'l Office 8 Pawing, Palo, Leyte
Issuance of Certificate of Registration/Notice of Eligibility	March 28, 2005	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM	NFA-Reg'l Office 8 Pawing, Palo, Leyte
Pre-Bidding Conference	March 31, 2005	2:00 PM	Conference Rm, NFA R.O. 8, Pawing, Palo, Leyte
Submission and Opening of Bids	April 12, 2005	9:30 AM	Conference Rm, NFA R.O. 8, Pawing, Palo, Leyte

A special Power of Attorney (SPA) issued by the Prospective Bidder Owner (for sole proprietorship and/or Resolution from the Board authorizing their Representative (for Corporations) to purchase the bid documents, to sign for and in behalf of the Owner/Corporation whatever documents relative to the bidding and to attend the Pre-Bidding Conference and during the Opening of the Bids shall be required.

NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bids thereof, to waive any formalities or defects found therein, or to accept such bids or award to any Contractor whose Bid is considered most advantageous to the National Food Authority or to the government.

(Sgd.) ANTONIO J. ADORABLE
Asst. Regional Manager/Chairman-RBAC, NFA-RO8

(PDI—March 8 & 12, 2005)

GMA RECEIVES BOOK ABOUT PHILIPPINE PRESIDENTS

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo receives a copy of the book 'So Help Us God: The Presidents of the Philippines and their Inaugural Addresses' from authors Ed Malaya (middle) and Jonathan Malaya (leftmost) in Malacañan. The book features the biographies and inaugural addresses of the fourteen presidents, from General Emilio Aguinaldo to the incumbent president, as well as economic performance of the various administrations. The book was launched at the Club Filipino in San Juan in early October, with former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel V. Ramos in attendance, and at the University of San Francisco (California) last month. Copies are available in leading bookstores.

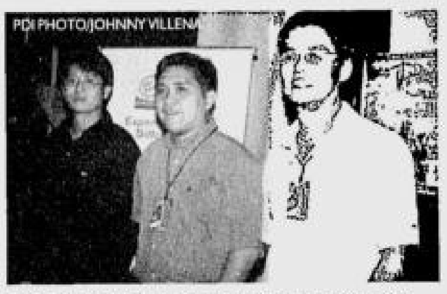
Bits & Clips

SM Bowling Cup winners

SM BOWLING Center is the only bowling center in the Philippines that gives P100,000 for every perfect game and a brand new car for the second perfect game. The 4th SM Bowling Cup perfect game winners are: Jhake Santos, (Aug. 17 /Sept. 12) P100,000 and Chevrolet Aveo Car - North Edsa ; Christian Kho - (Aug. 19) P100,000 - North Edsa; Danilo Tuazon - (Sept. 5 / Oct. 12) P 100,000 - Megamall; Kim Ian Chi - (Sept. 9) P 100,000 - North Edsa; Julius Sy - (Sept. 12) P 100,000 - North Edsa; Art Dacumos - (Dec. 4) P100,000 - Cebu; Alex Ngoi - (Dec. 6) P100,000 - North Edsa; Robert Tan - (Feb. 7) P100,000 - North Edsa; Ricardo Balana - (Feb. 11) P 100,000 - North Edsa; Cecil Contaoi - (Feb. 16) P 100,000 - Fairview.

Sta. Elena Village open house

ON MARCH 13, come and discover Sta. Elena Village, a unique and charming residential community surrounded by the country's best fairways, the Sta. Elena Golf Course. Sunday Mass will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. Located just off the south expressway, and only 40 minutes from Makati, Sta. Elena Village offers visitors the award-winning Sta. Elena Golf and Country Club and two luxurious residential enclaves, Banahaw and Sierra Madre. Other amenities include a clubhouse with Balinese-inspired garden, infinity pools and the fun farm, an interactive petting zoo where children can learn nature and animal appreciation. Fun activities await you and your family at the fun farm during the open house. For inquiries, please call 887-2390, 0920-9118105 and 0920-9247351.



PDI PHOTO/JOHNNY VILLENA

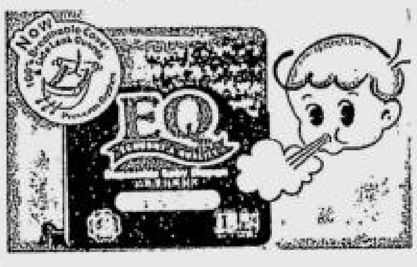
PRISTONTALE LAUNCH PARTY

Shown during the launch are (from left): Ramil dela Cruz, chief marketing officer of Netplay Inc; Ludwig Santos, chief web development and Romy Tan, sales director.

Product FILES

Cool babies wear breathable diapers

SINCE summer is upon us, it is highly recommended to use disposable diapers that have "breathable" covers . EQ Diapers with its breathable cover provide better air ventilation for baby's extra comfort. And because the air flows freely, stuffiness is lessened thus preventing rashes. Baby remains cool and comfortable at all times. And EQ, the true "Economy & Quality" brand comes with features better than the leading brand. It can absorb more liquid, has a 100 percent breathable cover and leak guards offered at the same affordable price. For practical moms who sure know a wise buy, EQ diapers are available at all leading supermarkets, groceries and drugstores nationwide.

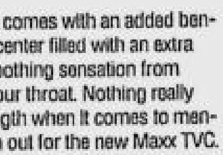


Prestone Fuel Injector Cleaner does a 'super job'

FUEL INJECTOR CLEANER

ACCOMPLISHING a "super job" of cleaning fuel injectors is the new Prestone Super Concentrated Fuel Injector Cleaner. It has a "super" concentrated liquid that helps restore performance and improve acceleration lost due to fouled injectors through the powerful 1 tank clean up chemistry. This formula also cleans carburetors and intake valves and is good for 20 gallons or 75 liters.

Maxx Extra Strength



MAXX Extra Strength guarantees all-out menthol satisfaction. Compared to the other Maxx variants, Extra Strength provides 250 percent more menthol action. Plus, it comes with an added benefit of Vitamin C and a center filled with an extra kick of menthol for a soothing sensation from your mouth down to your throat. Nothing really beats Maxx Extra Strength when it comes to menthol satisfaction. Watch out for the new Maxx TVC.

Republic of the Philippines
Office of the President
Metro Manila Development Authority
PASIG RIVER REHABILITATION COMMISSION

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Project: Pasig river Environmental Management and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program (PAREMAR)
Loan No: Asian Development Bank (ADB) Loan No. 1746-PHI

Description of Works : Construction and Development of a Linear Park along Brgy. Hulo in Mandaluyong City

1. The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has received a loan from the ADB toward the cost of PAREMAR and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan, together with the GOP counterpart funds, to payments under the Contract for Brgy. Hulo Linear Park (Contract No. EPA-LPP-19)

2. The Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) as the executing agency now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the following contract package:

Contract Package	Construction and Development of a Linear Park
Contract No.	EPA-LPP-19
Area	3,459 sq.m.
Location	Brgy. Hulo, Mandaluyong City
Contract Duration	180 calendar days

Project Description
Construction and development of a linear park/promenade which includes the following items of work: plant box, gazebo, trellis, railings, paintings, electrical works, plumbing works, landscaping, billboard/flagpole, marker, rehabilitation of "Tawiran ng Bayan" ferry station and waiting shed.

3. Interested Bidders shall secure the Bid Documents and submit bids as follows:

Activity	Date	Time	Venue	Remarks
Securing of (a) Eligibility Checklist or (b) submission of Letter of Intent and purchase of complete set of Bid Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Php 12,500.00	From 14-18 Mar	8AM - 5PM	PRRC 2F, MWSS Engineering Bldg. Katipunan Road, Old Balara, Quezon City	Eligibility checklist is free of charge
Securing of additional eligibility information (if any) and inspection of Bidding Documents	From 14-18 Mar	8AM - 5PM		For those who secured only the Eligibility Checklist
a. Pre-Bid Conference b. Site Inspection	01 Apr 01 Apr	10AM 1PM	Mandaluyong City Hall Coronado Street, Brgy. Hulo, Mandaluyong City	Right after Pre-Bid Conference
Deadline for submission of Bids	18 Apr	9AM	PRRC (same address)	Late bids (bids submitted after 9AM) shall not be accepted
Opening of Bids	18 Apr	10AM		Bids shall be opened in the presence of the bidders

4. The City of Mandaluyong shall be the implementing agency of the Contract.

5. Bidding (Eligibility Check/Prequalification, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract) shall be conducted on the basis of local competitive bidding among interested Bidders from ADB eligible source countries as defined under the "Guidelines for Procurement by the Asian Development Bank and its Borrowers" pursuant to the implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. No. 9184 and ADB Guidelines for the Procurement of Civil Works as standardized under the harmonized ADB-GOP Procurement of Works guidelines.

6. PRRC-IABAC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at anytime prior to Contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) BINGLE H.B. GUTIERREZ
Executive Director

Pasig River Rehabilitation Comission
2F, MWSS Engineering Bldg., Katipunan Road, Old Balara, Quezon City 1105
Tel Nos 433-3444 and 433-344
E-mail Address prrc@i-sys.com
Fax No 926-5234
(PDI - March 5 & 12, 2005)

THE HOME ACCENTS GROUP OF THE PHILIPPINES, I
UCTION OF OFFICERS, DIRECTORS & NEW MEMB

EXPORTERS NIGHT

Officers of the Home Accents Group of the Philippines (Hapi), Louis Sicat, chair; Verna Acosta of Nature's Design Enterprises, vice president; Milet Pineda of CTC Export, president; Lenny Abella of Philexport pose with guest speaker and Philexport president Sergio Luis-Ortiz Jr. during their induction at the Green Valley Club.

PROJECT FOR THE PHILIPPINE NAUTICAL HIGHWAY

Shown right on their mark at Manila's 'Kilometer 0' are (from left) Donald Tapan, photographer; Randy Urlanda, editor; Jorge Sabino, writer; and Mylene Kasilag, Brand Equity Asia publisher - the four leaders of the 12-man team who would travel this summer along the entire length of the Philippine Nautical Highway. Out of the team's four-month trip, as part of Brand Equity Asia's commitment to the Philippine economy, it will produce a comprehensive and dynamic coffeetable book, "Seamless Land Travel Across The Philippine Archipelago".

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People, Events & Products

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Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Insular Life conducts 2nd medical mission at adopted school

OWING to its commitment of serving the community it belongs to, Insular Life conducted its second medical mission with the students of its adopted school, Muntinlupa Itaas Elementary School (Mies).

Last Nov. 27, as culmination of its week-long 94th anniversary celebration, Insular Life together with its subsidiary, Insular Life Health Care (I-Care), sponsored a medical mission where about 300 student patients availed of its free medical consultations. Insular Life president and COO Mayo Jose B. Ongsingco spearheaded the event, with the help of I-Care president Carlos D. Da Silva.

Eight doctors from I-Care and the Muntinlupa City Health Office, as well as the I-Care clinic personnel were on hand to provide medical consultations. Insular Life volunteers also participated in the event, manning the registration table, ensuring the orderliness of the activity, and holding a face-painting session for the children who were waiting for their turn.

Prior to the event, Insular Life also held a hygiene kit drive among its employees, and was able to collect a total of 369 kits. Each kit contained a soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, and alcohol. These, together with free medicines were distributed to the student patients during the medical mission.

On its 95th year, Insular Life continues to serve not only its various stakeholders, but also the community it belongs to. It has two adopted schools, the Muntinlupa Itaas Elementary School, and the Pedro Diaz High School - Buli Annex, now the Muntinlupa Business High School. Last year, the company held its first medical mission at Mies. This year, aside from holding a medical mission, Insular Life also held a book donation drive among its employees, and sponsored the renovation of the Mies library. It also has a continuing project, the Adopt-A-Scholar Program, where employees adopt selected students of Mies and see them through their elementary schooling.

UNIONBANK SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S HOUR

Once again, UnionBank threw its support to the fund campaign for marginalized Filipino kids through Children's Hour. UnionBank gave P942,557.72 representing the sum og UnionBank's pledges via salary deduction, the bank's matching corporate donation, plus UnionBank's 2004 endowment donation of P250,000. Photo shows (from left): UnionBank chair and CEO Justo A. Ortiz, Ambassador Narcisa Escaler, UnionBank director for corporate philanthropy and social responsibility Maria Goolsby, UnionBank FVP Joseling Arce and Ambassador Bienvenido Tan Jr during the presentation of the Bank's check donation to CHPI.

aboitiz
Aboitiz Group Foundation, Inc.

ABOITIZ RENEWS COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN'S HOUR

The Aboitiz Group has been actively involved in the cause of Children's Hour Philippines since the organization's establishment in 1999. Last year, Children's Hour was reintroduced to draw more people to participate in the fund drive. Aboitiz Group companies, among them Aboitiz Transport System Corp., Aboitiz & Company, and Union Bank of the Philippines, donated over P1.5 million. Present during the recent turnover of the Aboitiz donation to Children's Hour were Aboitiz and Company president Jon Ramon Aboitiz (front row, 2nd from right) who turns over the Aboitiz Group check donation to Bernie Liu, chair of the Children's Hour Cebu steering committee. Beside them are Aboitiz Group Foundation, Inc (AGFI) president Erramon Aboitiz (right) and Children's Hour vice chair Tito Solomon (left); (back row, from left) Ayala Center Cebu's Joy Polloso, AGFI's Romy Ronquillo, Mikel Aboitiz and AGFI managing trustee Sonny Carpio. Children's Hour is a fundraising organization that supports projects and programs for the development and welfare of children. For inquiries on how you can help, you may get in touch with the secretariat office at (02) 894-1663 or e-mail: ask@childrenshour.org.ph.

Hedcor leads awarding ceremonies of 3rd WED-EWC

HYDRO Electric Development Corp (Hedcor) recently led the awarding ceremonies of the 3rd World Environment Day Essay Writing Contest (WED-EWC) onboard SuperFerry 17, while in port at the Eva Macapagal Super Terminal.

Organized in cooperation with 2GO Express, SuperFerry, and United Nations Information Centre for the Philippines (UNIC), the 3rd WED-EWC, with the theme, "The benefits of clean and renewable energy," was launched nationwide in June. The contest is for high school students aimed to increase awareness and appreciation of clean and renewable energy. Since the annual essay tilt was launched in 2002, it has attracted about one thousand student participants from more than 100 high schools.

This year, there were 358 entries received from 155 high schools nationwide. The entries were sent in and sorted by 2GO Express and SuperFerry. Five finalists were then chosen and were flown to Manila for an on-the-spot essay-writing finale. The environmental essay contest winner is Neil Andrew Chiu Llorente of Santa Maria Catholic School in Iloilo City.

Essays were judged based on the following criteria: content - 35 percent, organization- 35 percent, style - 20 percent, mechanics - 10 percent. The first prize was P10,000; second prize P7,000; third prize P5,000 and consolation prizes at P3,000 each.

Hedcor is the largest developer of mini hydropower in the country and a leading producer of clean energy. 2GO Express is the country's prime mover of cargo and leading courier service provider. UNIC is the field office in the Philippines responsible for disseminating information on UN activities and generating awareness for UN issues. SuperFerry is the largest shipping company in the country engaged in passenger transport and cargo liner services.

PORK & BEANS
Hunt's
Hunt's
Tomato Expert

HUNT'S FUN DAY SCHOOL TOUR

Hunt's Pork and Beans recently concluded the first round of its Hunt's Fun Day school tour where it brought loads of fun and excitement to select schools in Metro Manila. Students were treated to a day of lively games and activities including a photo session, and an entertaining and educational mime presentation. Hunt's also gave away lots of prizes like goodie bags and school supplies that the kids loved. Photo shows students of Diliman Preparatory School enjoying the wonderful surprises prepared by the Hunt's team. Watch out as Hunt's continues to make its rounds in select schools in Metro Manila.

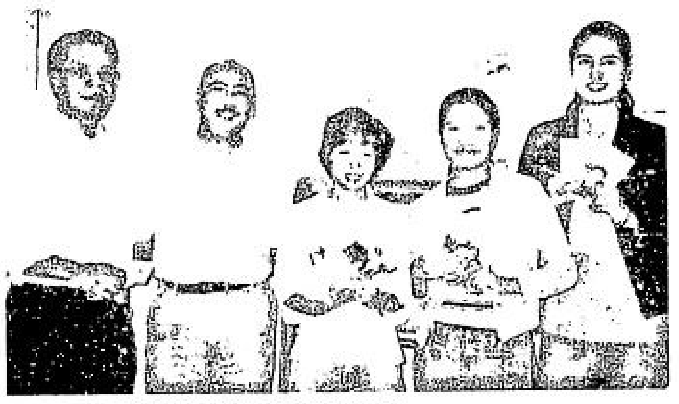
4th consecutive PRS A plus rating for Berkley Plans

FOR the fourth straight year now, Berkley International Plans obtained a PRS A plus corporate credit rating from the Philippine Rating Services Corporation, a local affiliate of Standard and Poor's.

At a time of challenges for the pre-need industry, this rating serves to reassure anew all planholders and prospective clients of Berkley's "Above-average capacity to meet its financial commitments" compared to other Philippine corporations.

Berkley holds the distinction of being the first and only pre-need company thus far to have submitted its financial books for scrutiny and credit rating by an objective third party. The company first applied for a rating in 2001 and has renewed its credit rating application yearly hence. Berkley president, Alan Rafe, stated that their yearly application for a credit rating is a testimony to their confidence that the company's financial books will repeatedly reveal its strength and stability, a fact that, in turn, should reinforce the trust of the public in general and of their planholders in particular.

In assigning the rating, PhilRatings considered Berkley Plans' adequate level of investment in its trust fund relative to its actuarial reserve liabilities; its compliance with SEC guidelines and reportorial requirements; its rank as 4th in educational plans; the improvement in its margins in year 2004 despite the fluctuations experienced by the pre-need industry; and its adequate capitalization level. Berkley Plans is exclusively distributed in the Philippines by marketing innovator Family First Inc.



MY SPECIAL VALENTINE DRAW

DTI director Arnaldo del Rosario (extreme left) gladly poses with Manny Echevarria, Ellen Lambincio, Grace Guico and Malou Medina of Bookware Publishing Corp during the monthly draw of 'Nokia 3650 Raffle Promo' held recently at the company's offices in Pasig City. For the readers of My Special Valentine and MSV Classics Illustrated pocketbooks, its lucky winner is Joan Dizon of Pampanga. For inquiries, call 631-8894.

KRIS AQUINO GETS MEXICAN TREAT

Taco Bell, the world's no. 1 taco, recently treated birthday girl Kris Aquino with a party fare at a popular game show she hosts Pilipinas, Game Ka Na Ba? Guests, show staff and Kris all enjoyed a feast of Tacos and Taco Supremes. In photo are actress/host Kris Aquino, Taco Bell marketing officer Isabel Pizarro (right) and Taco Bell team members (background). Taco Bell offers Mexican inspired food such as popular burrito, soft and crunchy tacos, quesadillas and nachos. It is located at the ground level of Gateway Mall beside Araneta Coliseum.

AGORA CONFERENCE

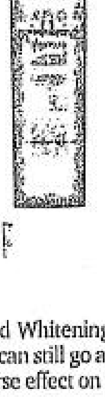
Tom Banguis, president and CEO of ad agency AB Communications, recently gave a talk about 'Marketing Tools Used by Successful Companies in a Convergent Market' during the Philippine Marketing Association's 2004 Agora Conference.

HEARTS THROB AT JOHN PRAT'S B-DAY MALL SHOW

It was a scream day at SM South Mall Las Pinas last Feb. 19. Fans from the south got the view at all angles when they saw John Prats celebrating his birthday together with Mosang, the X-Ten Dancers and the bodacious dancing princess Camille Prats. For more than an hour, fans clapped, had games and sang for their heart throb's birthday bash sponsored by Hawk Bag, SO-EN, Time depot, RDL Baby Skin Whitening Lotion, Nestle Fun Toppings and Jollibee. And what a day it was, fans will never forget the man who made their hearts throb for more. And you can get more when you visit his gigs soon at your local mall.

Product FILES

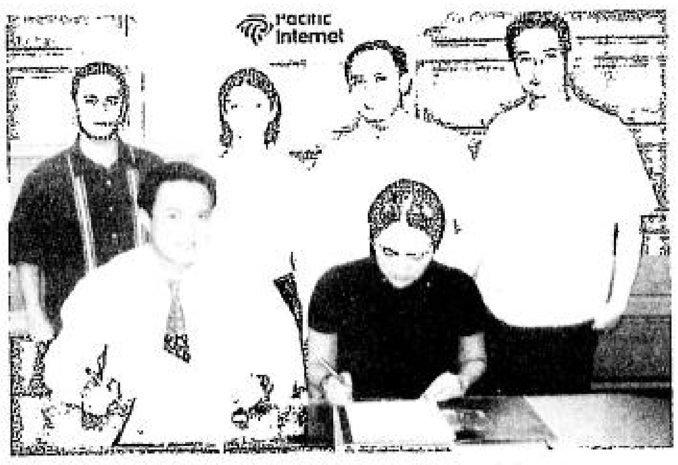
Ysa Botanica launches face and body whitening lotion



YSA Botanica, the dermatologist-formulated skincare line once more races ahead of its competition with its introduction of the first ever face and body skin whitening lotion. "Our latest product is a welcome addition to the market not only because of its effectiveness but since it whitens both the face and the body, it also promises to be easier on the budget," says Ysa Botanica Face and Body Whitening Lotion brand manager, Karen Raymundo.

Ysa Botanica Whitening Lotion contains synergistic active ingredients that regulate melanin skin pigmentation and results in whiter skin in just one week. Raymundo explains that apart from its whitening properties, Ysa Botanica Face and Body Whitening Lotion also moisturizes and softens skin while its green tea extract protects the skin against irritation. "And unlike other skin whitening lotions," she says, "Ysa Botanica Face and Body Skin and Whitening Lotion has UVA/UVB sun protection compounds so users can still go about their normal daily activity without the fear of any adverse effect on their skin or on the whitening process."

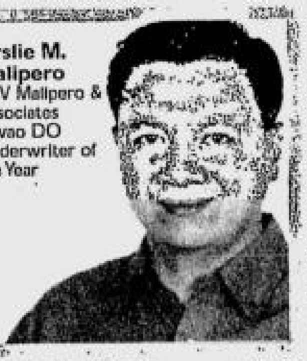
One of the more trusted brands in the market, Ysa Botanica is a brainchild of eminent dermatologist, Dr. Isabel Lopez-Nazal. Raymundo adds that Dr. Nazal's expertise and her experience in developing skin and beauty products designed for Asian skin, ensures that this latest offering will be as effective as all the other Ysa Botanica products. "At only P78 per 125ml. bottle, Ysa Botanica is also more cost-effective than other brand, both local and imported."



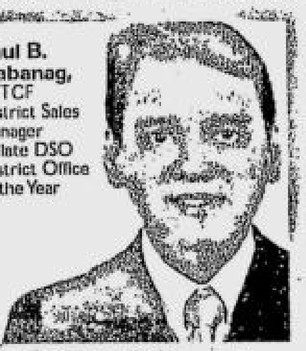
BPM, PACIFIC INTERNET PHILS INK MOA

Business Plus Marketing (BPM), the exclusive distributor of Casio Calculator products led by Joel Serrano, sales and marketing manager (seated left) and Joey Lantin, product manager, prepaid of Pacific Internet Phils sign an agreement for a co-branding promotion. At present, everyone can enjoy the power of free Internet surfing for every purchase of Casio Calculator selected models. Photo shows (standing from left) BPM marketing officers Nerlon Vico, Francis Annie Maristela, Ino Mandapat, Pacific Internet corporate sales manager and Cho Delos Santos, national sales manager, prepaid.

Presidential Honorees


Arslie M. Malipero
CPV Malipero & Associates
Davao DO
Underwriter of the Year

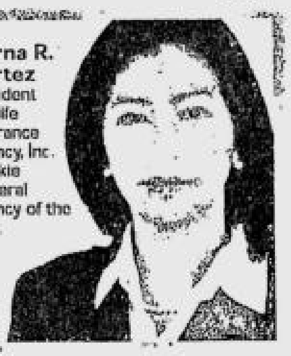
Peter C. Sheng
Unit Manager
La Milagrosa Mutual Investments
Binondo DSO
Unit of the Year


Raul B. Mabanag,
LUTCF
District Sales Manager
Malate DSO
District Office of the Year

Leonido C. Gameng,
LUTCF
Life Strategies Ins. Agency, Inc.
Regular Business Producer of the Year

Luis K. Tan
Corlife Insurance Agency, Inc.
Rookie Underwriter of the Year

Alberto C. Pogoy
District Sales Manager
Davao Mega DSO
Rookie District Office of the Year


Myrna R. Cortez
President
Corlife Insurance Agency, Inc.
Rookie General Agency of the Year.

Let's raise our glasses to hard work and professional excellence!

Congratulations!

Special Awardees

Special Achievement Award
Paul T. Bolaños
President
First Union Insurance and Financial Agency, Inc.

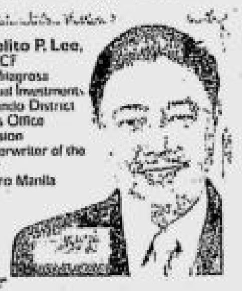
For having registered in 2004 the highest first-year premium production among all sales units in the history of Insular Life.

Special Citation
Raul B. Mabanag,
LUTCF District Sales Manager
Malate DSO

For having registered in 2004 the highest first-year premium production among all district offices and district sales offices in the history of Insular Life.

Divisional Honorees

Nunnatus A. Cortez,
LUTCF
Corlife Ins. Agency, Inc.
Division Underwriter of the Year
General Agencies


Joselito P. Lee,
LUTCF
La Milagrosa Mutual Investments
Binondo District Sales Office
Division Underwriter of the Year
Metro Manila

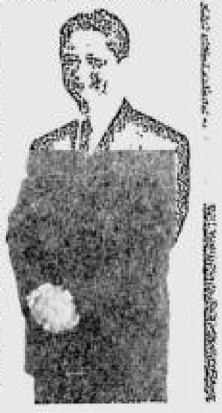
Teresita S. Ragos,
LUTCF
Primo Insurance
Greenhills District Office
Division Unit of the Year
Metro Manila

Message

It is always a source of pride for me knowing that within the ranks of Insular Life are life insurance professionals [illegible] and service excellence a vital part of their work credo. The awareness that Insular life, through its [illegible] the financial security of the Filipino public and to the continued success of the life insurance in[illegible]

To all our 2004 sales achievers whom we are honoring tonight, may they continue to serve as worthy [illegible] and hold aloft the banner of Insular Life.

Vicente R. Ayllon
Chairman of the [illegible]



Message

As president of Insular Life, I am pleased to be working with sales professionals whose hard work and drive not [illegible] reach their own goals, but also inspire their colleagues to do the same. Tonight, we honor the outstanding perfor[illegible] a Testimonial Dinner and Awards Night to celebrate their victories.

To these men and women who are considered the best in our agency force, we salute you. May your ready res[illegible] continue to power Insular Life's triumphs in the years to come.

Mayo Jose B. Ongsingco
President and Chief Operating Officer

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Million Dollar Round Table Candidates

Jinna P. Domino
A.J. Domino & Assocs. Gen. Ins. Agency, Inc.
Qualifying and Life Member
Honor Roll Member

Marilou L. dela Cruz, LUTCF
Buendia DSO
Life Member
Honor Roll Member

Celia P. Esma
EsmaLife Gen. Ins. Agency, Inc.
Life Member
Honor Roll Member

Teresita D. Dada, LUTCF
Dada Ins Agency In
Life Memb
Honor Ro
Member

Carmen C.Yap
I&C and Associates
Qualifying Member

Lina S. Abrantes
Davao Mega DSO
Qualifying Member

Leonido C. Gameng, LUTCF
Life Strategies Ins. Agency, Inc.
Qualifying Member

Marygen C. Serrona
Ormoc DSO
Qualifying Member

Dorothy N. Go
Balanga DSO I
Qualifying Member

GAMA International Award Recipients

Pedro D. Arela
Cebu DSO III
Career Development Award - Silver

Ma. Grace R. Berino
Ormoc DSO
Career Development Award - Silver

Leonila P. Ceniza
Cebu DSO IX
Career Development Award - Silver

Amelia L. de Vera
Aurora Boulevard DSO II
Career Development Award - Silver

Marilou L. dela Cruz, LUTCF
Buendia DSO
Career Development Award - Silver

National Prestige Club Members

Lina S. Abrantes
Davao Mega DSO
Executive Member

Marichu P.Alvarez
Lucena DO
Executive Member

Joselito P. Lee, LUTCF
Binondo DSO
Executive Member

Carmen L. Siy
Pagadian DSO
Executive Member

Teresita P. Bautista
Cabanatuan DO
Qualifying Member

Dolores B. Borda
Quezon Avenue DSO
Qualifying Member

Anacorita M. Brilata
Ormoc DSO
Qualifying Member

Lorraine C. Diaz
Pagadian DSO
Qualifying Member

Evelyn D. Esmille
E.Z. Mendoza Gen. Ins. Agency, Inc
Qualifying Member

Leonido C. Gameng, LUTCF
Life Strategies Ins. Agency, Inc.
Qualifying Member

Genevieve R. Ramos
Cebu Premier Life DSO
Qualifying Member

Luis K. Tan
Corlife Insurance Agency, Inc.
Qualifying Member

Marie Frances H. Tan
Lucena DO
Qualifying Member

Severina O. Velos
Malaybalay DSO
Qualifying Member

Remedios O. Viloria, LUTCF
E&R Ins. Agency, Inc.
Qualifying Member

Carmen C.Yap
J&C and Associates Inc.
Qualifying Member

Insular Life Quality Award Recipients

Lorraine C. Diaz
Pagadian DSO

Be Lan O. Galarita
Ozamiz DSO

Joselito P. Lee, LUTCF
Binondo DSO

Priscilla H. Paguio
Balanga DSO I

Anacorita N. Villegas
Citilife Ins. Agency, Inc.

Emma G. Arciete.
The Great Provider

Godofredo A. Paule, Jr.
San Fernando DSO I

Carmen C.Yap
J&C and Associates

Teresita P. Tan
Balanga DSO I

Do
T.T
Qu
Ave
DSC

Ronilyn R. Revoltar
Quezon Avenue DSO

Maria RoseliaO. Ordoñez
Aurora Boulevard DSO II

Florenda L. Bacon
Cebu DSO III

Teresita S. Ragos, LUTCF
Greenhills DO

Irene V. Asur
Olongapo DSO I

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Arslie M. Malipero
Davao DO
Court of the Table
Qualifying Member

Joselito P. Lee,
LUTCF
Binondo DSO
Qualifying Member

Remedios O.Viloria,
LUTCF
E&R Ins. Agency, Inc.
Qualifying Member

Nunnatus A. Cortez,
LUTCF
Corlife Ins. Agency Inc.
Qualifying Member

Genevieve R. Ramos
Cebu Premier Life DSO
Qualifying Member

Teresita P. Bautista
Cabanatuan DO
Qualifying Member

Anacorita M. Brilata
Ormoc DSO
Qualifying Member

Abigail L. Francisco
Malolos DSO III
Qualifying Member

Azucena G. Mendoza
Greenhills DO
Qualifying Member

Raul B. Mabanag,
LUTCF
Malate DSO
Career Development Award - Silver

Rogelio F. Tan
Quezon Avenue DSO
Career Development Award - Silver

Teresita L. Arela,
LUTCF
The Great Provider
Career Development Award - Bronze

Mercedita F. Gurrea
Cebu Eagle DSO
Career Development Award - Bronze

Ida S. Jacob,
LUTCF
Binondo DSO
Career Developme
Award - Bronze

Marcelo L. Lantican
Citilife Ins. Agency, Inc
Career Development Award - Bronze

Virginia T. Soares
Escolta DSO
Executive Member

Peter C. Sheng
Binondo DSO
Executive Member

Rosita M. Abatayo
Cebu DSO III
Associate Member

Nunnatus A. Cortez,
LUTCF
Corlife Ins. Agency, Inc.
Associate Member

Teresita D. Dada,
LUTCF
Dada Ins. Agency, Inc.
Associate Member

Teresita S. Ragos,
LUTCF
Greenhills DO
Associate Member

Dorothy N. Go
Balanga DSO I
Qualifying Member

Zenaida B. Labag
San Pablo DSO III
Qualifying Member

Josephine M. Malaluan
Cabanatuan DSO III
Qualifying Member

Arslie M. Malipero
Davao DO
Qualifying Member

Azucena G. Mendoza
Greenhills DO
Qualifying Member

Alvin Q. Panganiban
First Union Insurance & Financial Agency Inc
Qualifying Member

Elizabeth M. dela Peña
Malolos DSO III
Qualifying Member

Marilou L. dela Cruz,
LUTCF
Buendia DSO
Qualifying Member

Raul B. Mabanag,
LUTCF
Malate DSO
Qualifying Member

Ida S. Jacob,
LUTCF
Binondo DSO
Qualifying Member

Rogelio F. Tan
Quezon Avenue DSO
Qualifying Member

Alvin Q. Panganiban
First Union Insurance & Financial Agency Inc.

Virginia T. Soares
Escolta DSO

Luis K. Tan
Corlife Ins. Agency, Inc.

Conchita G. Tiu
Malate DSO

Eduardo T. Tiu
Malate DSO

othy
ngko,

Remedios O.Vilori
LUTCF
E&R Ins. Agency, Inc

Myrna N.Aparis
Aurora Boulevard DSO II

Paul T. Bolaños
First Union Insurance & Financial Agency, Inc.

Lucila A. Co,
LUTCF
Quezon Avenue DSO

Dolores B. Borda
Quezon Avenue DSO

Lina S. Abrantes
Davao Mega DSO

Ma. Lourdes J. Isorena,
LUTCF
Binondo DSO

Alice Alejandria P. Chu
Cebu Star DSO

Abegail U. de Guia
Tacloban DSO

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Budget worries US Fed, not record trade gap

NEW YORK—Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan said on Thursday he was not "overly" concerned about the record US trade gap and heavy consumer debt loads, but the nation's budget outlook gave him pause.

"The resolution of our current account deficit and household debt burdens does not strike me as overly worrisome, but that is certainly not the case for our fiscal deficit," Greenspan told the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

"Our fiscal prospects are, in my judgment, a significant obstacle to long-term stability because the budget deficit is not readily subject to correction by market forces that stabilize other imbalances," he said.

The Fed chief said rapid globalization may have allowed the United States to carry large trade and budget gaps so far without economic harm.

"Has something fundamental happened to the US economy that enables us to disregard all the time-tested criteria for assessing when economic imbalances become worrisome?" Greenspan asked rhetorically. "Regrettably, the answer is no; the free lunch has still to be invented."

"We do however, seem to be undergoing what is likely, in the end, to be a one-time shift in the degree of globalization and innovation that has temporarily altered the specific calibrations of those criteria," he said.

Foreign investors are effectively funding record shortfalls in the US budget and current account, the broadest measure of the nation's trade, and some economists fear an abrupt reversal in investor confidence could hit the American economy hard.

When exchange rate swings are taken into account, Greenspan said, global investors so far have only modestly shifted away from dollar assets.

He did repeat, however, that foreign investors may at some point decide they are holding too many dollar-denominated assets.

He also reiterated that if the dollar were to drop further, foreign exporters could decide to no longer absorb the impact by accepting smaller profits. In that case, he said US import prices would rise and the trade gap would narrow.

Greenspan credited increasingly open global trade with lowering inflation and stabilizing economies, and said it could rebalance global trade without a crisis.

"Should globalization continue unfettered and thereby create an ever-more flexible international financial system, history suggests that current account imbalances will be defused with modest risk of disruption," he said. "The greater the degree of ... flexibility, the less the risk of a crisis."

Taking audience questions after his wide-ranging address, Greenspan said purchases of US government bonds by foreign central banks trying to keep their currencies down against the dollar had only a small impact on US interest rates.

"As best we can figure out ... it's really modest," he said. "We're talking about something in the area of 50 basis points—sometimes less, maybe sometimes more."

In his speech, Greenspan downplayed concerns that the high debt loads and low savings of US consumers carried the seeds of a future economic downturn.

He said a "significant" part of the recent rise in debt loads relative to income reflected a rise in home ownership—and a resulting climb in debt for former renters. *Reuters*

A WOMAN walks by a digital stock indicator while talking on her mobile phone in Tokyo. Tokyo stocks rose Friday on gains by technology and banking issues. The Nikkei Stock Average of 225 issues closed at 11,923.89 points on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, up 58.98 points, or 0.50 percent. AP

Asian tech shares up on Intel outlook

SINGAPORE—Asian shares rose on Friday on renewed optimism for Advantest Corp. and other technology stocks after Intel raised its outlook and as falling oil prices eased concerns that energy costs would erode profits.

Intel Corp.'s announcement that sales in the current quarter were better across its entire product line sent its shares up 1.8 percent in after-hours trading.

Japan's Nikkei stock index ended the morning session up 0.59 percent at 11,934.71. Banks and brokerages added to the market's gains, with Nomura Holdings Inc. surging 1.74 percent.

"It's not only Intel. Brokerage shares are higher on hopes of an industry restructuring ... Real estate stocks attract institutional buyers. A rotation of buying is going on," said Hiroaki Kuramochi, managing director at Bear Stearns in Tokyo.

MSCI's index of non-Japan shares was flat, with a a 1.15 percent jump in its technology component balanced by declines in the energy and mining sectors.

Chip and chip equipment makers in Asia followed Intel higher on hopes for an industry upswing.

Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd., the world's largest memory chip maker, gained 3.1 percent, while Kyocera Corp., the world's top maker of ceramic casings that house microchips, jumped 1.52 percent.

In Taiwan, the Intel news boosted Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co., the world's top contract chip maker, and rival United Microelectronics Corp. by 0.3 to 0.5 percent.

Taiwan's stock index rose 0.27.

South Korea's benchmark KOSPI stock index jumped 1.85 percent on tech gains and a 2.4 percent rise in shares of POSCO Co. Ltd. after the company announced plans to raise domestic steel prices.

LG.Philips LCD Co. Ltd., the world's second-largest flat-screen maker, advanced 4.47 percent in Seoul after a source close to the company told Reuters it planned to raise prices for some liquid crystal displays.

Indices in Singapore and Hong Kong were flat. Australia's index fell 0.33 percent on a pullback by mining stocks and concern about a possible interest rate rise.

The US dollar was expected to remain under pressure with US trade data due later on Friday.

Traders were concerned that a rise in the US current account deficit could make foreigners less willing to continue funding it.

That hair-trigger issue came to the surface on Thursday when Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi briefly caused a sell-off in the dollar by merely mentioning diversification of foreign exchange reserves.

Spot gold traded at $441.20 an ounce in Asia, down from a 2005 high of $442.50 hit in late New York trade.

The yield on the 10-year benchmark cash JGB fell half a basis points to 1.475 percent.

The Dow Jones industrial average closed up 0.42 percent at 10,851.51. The Nasdaq Composite Index was down 0.08 percent to close at 2,059.72 before the Intel announcement. *Reuters*

Oil prices continue dip

NEW YORK—Oil prices fell more than 2 percent from near-record highs on Thursday as traders turned their attention to swelling stockpiles in the United States, the world's largest energy market.

Losses were limited by lingering concerns that global demand growth is outpacing increases in output from major producers, and by a weaker dollar that has helped divert investors to soaring commodities markets.

US light crude dropped $1.22 to $53.55 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange, after coming within 2 cents of last October's all-time high of $55.67 on Wednesday.

The losses Thursday came after a US government report showed another increase in US crude oil inventories last week, the fourth in a row, bringing supply above 300 million barrels for the first time since July.

But dealers were skeptical whether rising stockpile levels in the key consumer nation were enough to convincingly halt crude's more than 20 percent spike since the start of the year, as dealers continue to fret over runaway world demand.

The United States said on Wednesday it was in contact with members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to let them know that high oil prices hurt the US economy, although most cartel officials have scotched talk of a possible increase in output at a March 16 meeting in Iran.

Iran, Qatar, Venezuela and Algeria have come out in favor of keeping production steady, and the high US crude stock levels appear to back their stance that markets are well supplied.

"Opec does not have the production capacity to increase its quotas," Algeria's Energy Minister Chakib Khelil said on Thursday.

Opec raised supply last year to the highest level in 25 years, leaving little spare production capacity to cope with output disruptions.

Traditionally, the cartel is wary of pumping more crude going into the second quarter of the year because demand falls off as the Northern Hemisphere winter draws to a close.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, informed its customers this week that it would be supplying the same volume of crude in April as it shipped in March. *Reuters*

Bono not running for WB

WASHINGTON—Bono won't be saving the world at the helm of the World Bank.

The lobby group co-founded by the U2 lead singer on Thursday knocked down media reports that he was a serious contender to head the global institution that provides billions of dollars annually to help the world's poorest countries.

"I can't believe I need to say this, but there are no circumstances in which Bono would be nominated or accept the World Bank job," said Jamie Drummond, executive director of DATA—or Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa—for which the Irish rocker campaigns to raise awareness of Africa's problems.

"Bono is flattered to be mentioned for such an important job but DATA does its best work from the outside."

Who will next lead the World Bank has been up in the air since former Wall Street investment banker James Wolfensohn announced in December he would leave the post when his term expires at the end of May.

Washington has always chosen the World Bank chief, traditionally an American, under an informal trans-Atlantic deal with Europe, which picks the head of the International Monetary Fund. Developing nations want this process changed so choices are made based on qualifications, not nationality.

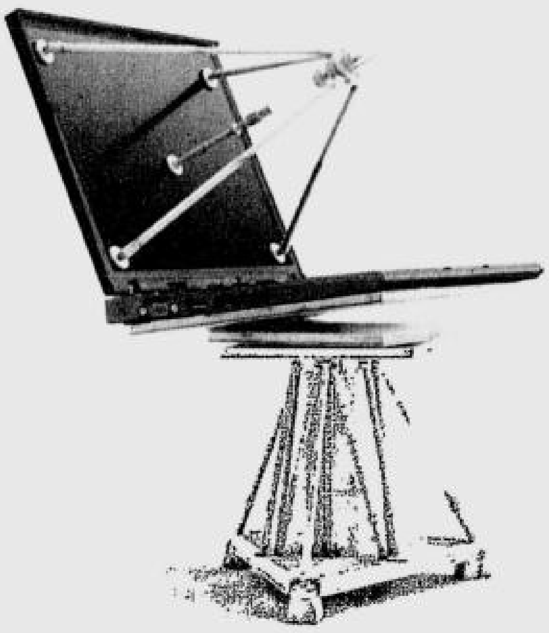
The 70-year-old Wolfensohn, an Australian who became American to take the job, was appointed by President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush's Treasury Department has said it now wants its own World Bank chief.

Global development experts and commentators have expressed surprise at the Bush administration's slow pace in naming a successor to Wolfensohn.

Some names tossed around by the media include former US Secretary of State Colin Powell, former Hewlett-Packard Co.

Chief Executive Carly Fiorina, Michigan State University President Peter McPherson, Iowa Republican Representative Jim Leach, US global AIDS coordinator Randall Tobias, and Treasury Undersecretary John Taylor.

Bono's name first surfaced for the job in a Los Angeles Times editorial last month that endorsed the rock star as a credible candidate, based on his effective lobbying on behalf of African development. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. *Reuters*



IBM recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional for Business.

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SCIENCE/HEALTH

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AMERICAN STUDY FINDING

Air pollution damages babies in womb

WASHINGTON—Babies' DNA can be damaged even before they are born if their mothers breathe polluted air, according to a study published recently.

"This is the first study to show that environmental exposures to specific combustion pollutants during pregnancy can result in chromosomal abnormalities in fetal tissues," said Kenneth Olden, director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, which funded the study.

New approaches

"These findings may lead to new approaches for the prevention of certain cancers."

The team at the Columbia University Center for Children's Environmental Health in New York studied 60 newborns for the report, published in the February issue of the journal Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention.

As part of a larger study, they monitored the babies' exposure to polycyclicaromatic hydrocarbons, which are compounds produced by burning.

"Although the study was conducted in Manhattan neighborhoods, exhaust pollutants are prevalent in all urban areas, and therefore the study results are relevant to populations in other urban areas," said Dr. Frederica Perera, who led the study.

To determine exposure to pollution, the mothers filled out questionnaires and wore portable air monitors during the last three months of their pregnancies.

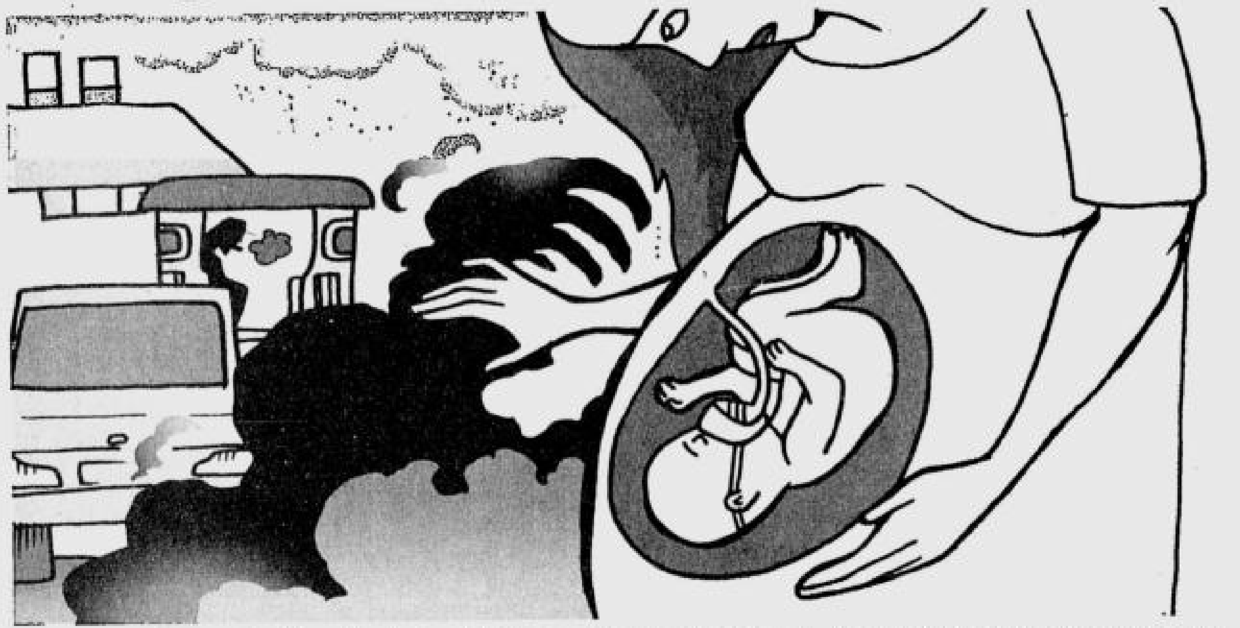
Exposure to pollution

Women were rated as having high, moderate or low exposure based on average pollution levels for the group.

Then they tested the umbilical cord blood of the newborns, looking specifically at the chromosomes, which carry the DNA.

Damage to chromosomes can cause cancer.

"We observed 4.7 chromosome abnormalities per thousand white blood cells in newborns from mothers in the low exposure group, and 7.2 abnormalities per thousand white blood cells in newborns from the high exposure mothers," Perera said in a statement.



The kind of damage to the chromosomes that they say was the type that tends to linger, making people more susceptible to cancer.

Other studies have linked exposure to pollution with leukemia and other cancers.

"While we can't estimate the precise increase in cancer risk, these findings underscore the need for policymakers at the federal, state and local levels to take appropriate steps to protect children from these avoidable exposures," Perera said.

Reuters

Air pollution killing us softly

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

MEDICAL FILES

(First of two parts)

THE INCIDENCE of respiratory tract infections (RTIs) is still increasing. If one looks at the records in many hospital ERs (emergency rooms) in Metro Manila, RTI is one of the leading causes for hospital admissions. If you blame it on the changing weather or the high pollen count this time of year, you're probably barking up the wrong tree. Stand at any intersection of Edsa and you'll know the answer.

Without realizing its real and imminent dangers, many residents in Metro Manila and other key cities including Baguio, which was previously thought to be a pristine city with fresh air, are making a difficult decision to stay. Many are not aware that unless something is done about the pollution problem, many parts of these cities will no longer be fit for human habitation in a decade or two.

The warning signs are familiar to all those who live in cities where the air is polluted: aching backs, wheezing, coughing, headache, dizziness and a myriad of other symptoms. Millions of Metro Manila residents breathe dirty air every day of the year.

Health concerns (asthma, other lung infections, heart problems, cancers, central nervous system damage and lowered IQs) increasingly affect people from all walks of life. It is a growing health hazard that has reached monstrous proportions. It is a true epidemic like no other plague we've seen before. And no community within the metropolis is immune from the growing threat of Metro Manila's degraded air quality.

Dirty city

World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Environment Program (Unep) studies show that Metro Manila's air shed is one of the five dirtiest and most polluted in the world, topped only by the metropolitan areas of Mexico City, Shanghai and New Delhi.

Reports indicate that 6,000 tons of particulates, chemicals and other pollutants are emitted daily by Metro Manila's two to three million vehicles, hundreds of factories, and households.

In March 1999, the British Medical Journal quoted Dr. Miguel Celdran, a pediatrician at the Makati Medical Center, who said: "About 90 percent of my patients have respiratory illness, and we're seeing babies as young as two months suffering from asthma. Twenty years ago, this was unheard of."

A survey by the Philippine Pediatric Society, which asked doctors to describe the most common illnesses that they treat, received the same response in every case: diseases of the upper respiratory tract.

Urine samples from children living and begging on the polluted streets showed that at least 7 percent had high lead concentrations.

Increased traffic

In 1997, a technical study financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) showed that air pollution in Metro Manila had reached critical proportions. The reasons are a 10 percent annual growth rate in the vehicle fleet, increased traffic, poor traffic planning that reduced speeds and escalated commuting times, and poorly tuned motors that ran unnecessary extra hours, in effect multiplying the pollutants being released into the air.

Other sources of air pollution include power plants, industries, restaurants and dry cleaning establishments.

Metro Manila's air quality crisis grows in scale daily. Vehicle densities, for instance, have increased from 675,310 in 1990, to 1.2 million in 1998, to over 2 million in 2001. Vehicle density in Metro Manila has gone from 1,600 per km^2 in 1995 to 3,144 per km^2 in 2000, and at an accelerating rate of growth. There is a direct correlation between the number of cars on the road and the amount of pollution in the air.

There are other sources of pollutants: power plants, dust from continuous street diggings, solvent evaporation, and ozone.

Despite the completion of the second elevated light rail system, there has been little effort to reduce the 500 or so bus companies operating some 5,000 plus diesel-spewing buses on Metro Manila's roadways or to relocate any of the bus terminals that clog Edsa.

And with any level of economic growth—welcome news for sure—will come increased transport demands in the city.

Why is math so difficult?

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua

NOW that exams are upon us, we focus once more on studies, teachers and the bane of math. Letters from readers regarding math problems start filling my inbox: from parents concerned about their children's performance, to teachers worried about the correct theories, and students wanting to know tips on how to do well in exams. I have written about these before, and for interested readers, please get hold of my book "Eureka! Thoughts on Math," which should be available in bookstores. (Or call Anvil sales at 637-3621/5141 and ask for Lorie or Bong or e-mail anvilsales@eudoramail.com.)

It seems math challenges are not limited to Filipinos. My colleague Dr. Cathy Vistro-Yu sent me an article from the Washington Post last December. In "Trying to Figure Out Why Math Is So Hard for Some," Valerie Strauss interviewed leading US math educators and attempted to delineate causes and possible remedies.

There is nothing earth-shaking in their responses, but they are a nice summary of current thinking about math problems.

Dyscalculia

Michelle Mazzocoo of the Math Skills Development Project at Baltimore's Kennedy Krieger Institute, insists that there is no one cause for math problems, which can often be poor achievement or even a disability (they are not the same thing, although many teachers are not trained to tell the difference).

"Some say that learning math is similar to tackling a foreign language; others say it is different from all other subjects, because math is abstract and requires more logical and ordered thinking. There are battles over how to teach it, dissension over gender issues, questions about the causes of poor student performance, and no universal definition for math learning disability, known as dyscalculia."

Moreover, diagnosing dyscalculia is not very easy. Although there have been tests, there are no totally agreed-upon criteria. Experts believe that 5 to 8 percent of US schoolchildren may have dyscalculia. There are no Philippine figures, although for the past decade, I have handled 20 children whom I suspect to have some form of math learning disability. (I want to stress that this is a small fraction of children I have diagnosed. Most students do not have any disability; they are either attention-deficit, math-phobic or just plain unmotivated.)

Mastering basics

But experts agree that math builds on concepts. For instance, a student struggling with elementary arithmetic is likely to do badly in algebra, unless she masters the basic concepts first.

Math is hierarchical; if you don't understand chapter 3, chances are you cannot proceed to chapter 4, much less chapter 5.

One suggestion I always give in math seminars is to master the basics. Use whatever method you want (taught in school, discovered on your own, given at a seminar). As long as the method is correct, utilize it to understand basic principles as much as you can. If you still don't understand the fundamentals, ask your teacher. (Keeping quiet and seething with frustration, or mouthing off and giving up are immature ways of dealing with problems—and with life.)

Modern neurological techniques have revealed that human brains may not have evolved to learn math easily.

University of Missouri psychology professor David Geary says, "Much of what kids are expected to learn has been developed in the past 1,000 to 2,000 years, sometimes much more recently, and thus people's brains aren't really designed to learn much of it—except, for instance basic counting and simple arithmetic. Language, including foreign languages if they are introduced early enough, is a completely different matter, as the brain is prewired to learn this."

Boys and girls

Then there is the gender issue. JoAnn Deak, author of "Girls Will Be Girls: Raising Confident and Courageous Daughters," asserts that boys and girls learn different things differently, and that schools should try various approaches. (This is of course easier said than done.)

For instance, she contends that neurological findings have shown that girls usually develop language skills faster, while boys, more often than not, their spatial and visual skills.

Poor instruction may also be another factor, and in our country, I believe this is one of the major causes of poor math learning. The government is trying its best—my colleagues and I have for years been training selected public school math teachers, but the need is so great, and the resources so few.

Parents and other family members should help one another; learning is too important to be left solely to schools.

Potato vaccine offers hope against hepatitis

WASHINGTON—A hepatitis vaccine grown in genetically engineered potatoes seemed to protect most people who ate them, researchers said.

About 60 percent of the volunteers who ate the biggest dose of potatoes showed an immune response that should protect against infection with the hepatitis B virus, Charles Arntzen of Arizona State University and colleagues reported.

They hope to develop the vaccine into something that could be used in developing nations, where most cases of hepatitis B are reported.

Urgent need

"There is an urgent need to make oral vaccines available in poorer countries of the world where infectious diseases are still the primary cause of death," said Yasmin Thanavala, an immunologist at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in New York, who helped to lead the study.

The researchers tested 42 volunteers, all of whom had been vaccinated against hepatitis B already using a commercially available shot.

They all ate pieces of raw potato, some of which contained a protein from the hepatitis B virus that is known to stimulate an immune system response.

Antibodies against hepatitis rose in more than 60 percent of the volunteers who ate three pieces of the gene-engineered potatoes and more than half those who ate two pieces, the researchers reported in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

About 40 percent of the volunteers did not seem to have the hoped-for immune response to the vaccine, but the researchers noted that commercially available shots also do not always prompt an immune response. either.

Expensive

The hepatitis B shot must be kept refrigerated and it is expensive, meaning it cannot be used in many poor areas.

Growing the vaccine in plants such as potatoes might make it more available, the researchers said.

And people may be more likely to take an edible vaccine than to get a shot.

Members of the team are also working to grow vaccines in bananas, tomatoes and tobacco.

"Global mortality due to this disease [HBV] is estimated to be 1 million cases per year," the researchers said.

Reuters

Adults not too old to get immunized

By Charles E. Buban

GETTING immunized is a lifelong, life-protecting responsibility.

Immunization is the best protection for adults—not just children—against certain diseases such as Hepatitis A and B, influenza, pneumococcal diseases (pneumonia and meningitis) and chicken pox.

"Many adults don't know they are supposed to get immunized against diseases. They think vaccinations are for kids," says Dr. Loreta Zoleta, an infectious disease specialist at the De La Salle University Medical Center in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

She says this is one reason immunization in adults does not receive the same priority as the immunization of children in this country.

"Immunization is an important part of health care even for the adults. Like children, they may also be at risk of infection from diseases that are vaccine-preventable," explains Zoleta.

First of its kind in RP

Zoleta says there is now an adult vaccination center—the first of its kind in the country—located in Dasmariñas, Cavite.

Managed by highly-specialized doctors, the DLSUMC Adult Vaccination Center was envisioned to ensure the health of every Filipino adults by providing them added protection from illness through administration of vaccines.

Zoleta, who also heads the center, reveals that the adult vaccination center is the brainchild of the hospital's Internal Medicine Department.

She adds that the center was also established to increase patient awareness and education on adult vaccination as well as increase accessibility of vaccines to more people.

Hospital's mission and vision

"It has always been part of this hospital's mission and vision to extend more than just medical treatment to patients," says Dr. Dina Gonzales, DLSUMC assistant medical director and one of the proponents of the center.

Gonzales notes that majority of today's adults don't have the luxury of vaccination when they were children, which is one reason they should be vaccinated.

"Adult Filipinos need to realize that the cost of getting sick is high and one way to prevent this is to be vaccinated," says Gonzales.

Research shows that medical related expenses arising from vaccine-preventable diseases cost 16 times more than the vaccine itself.

"Considering the financial implications of getting sick nowadays, a one-time preventive mechanism such as vaccination is a wiser choice," suggests the doctor.

Partnership

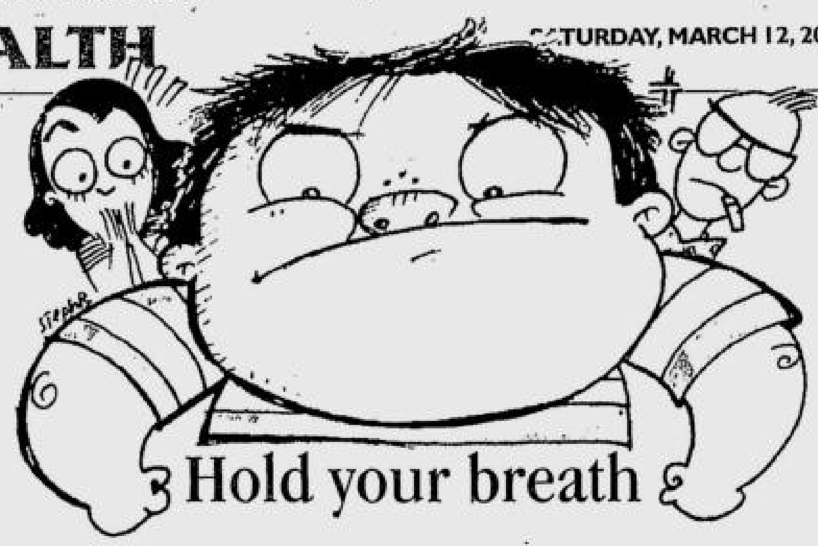
GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) became one of the center's first supporters when it partnered up with the hospital center by providing the vaccines it needs.

"The center is a tangible initiative to create awareness for and give importance to the disease prevention advocacy program of both the hospital and GSK not only in Cavite where the center is located, but hopefully in the whole country as well," says Dr. Hans Bock, GSK vice president and director for research and development in the Asia-Pacific, Middle Eastern and African region, who recently visited the country to meet with the center's proponents.

Bock adds that complications of diseases are more serious for adults.

"Not only health is affected when one is bedridden but life in general—family, livelihood, future goals, time to enjoy—is also suffers. With adult vaccination, serious complications may be prevented," he says.

In response, Gonzales acknowledges GSK's support saying that with the company's broad product portfolio—from respiratory, anti-infectives, alimentary, metabolic diseases to central nervous system and most especially vaccines—the company will have a huge impact in the center's future success.



Hold your breath

DISCOVER

Massie Santos Ballon

SOME talk about children throwing tantrums and then holding their breaths until they turn blue and pass out to protest what they consider a wrong done to them by their parents. Most people, though, probably learned to hold their breath during swimming lessons, so they could retrieve the coins on the swimming pool floor or stare at the fishes in the sea longer.

Insects, however, apparently hold their breath for very different reasons.

Previous studies have suggested two possible explanations: 1) to reduce water loss, as in the case with grasshoppers at night; and, 2) to allow insects such as ants to survive in environments with low oxygen (O_2) levels and high carbon dioxide (CO_2) levels, such as underground, where there may be limited or no access to fresh air.

Stefan Hetz, assistant professor of physiology at the Humboldt University in Germany, and Timothy Bradley, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of California at Irvine recently co-authored a study that presents a third theory: to avoid having toxically high levels of oxygen in their bodies. The study appears in the Feb. 3 issue of the journal Nature.

Breathing through spiracles

It should be pointed out that insects that live on land do not inhale through a mouth or nose; instead they have pores called spiracles on their abdomens.

The spiracular valves are connected to tubes called trachea that run through their bodies and branch off into smaller and smaller tubes, finally ending next to the tissues, which take in the oxygen and exchange it for the carbon dioxide, which moves backward through the trachea and is eventually expelled from the body.

Many insects can shut down their tracheas, causing what Hetz and Bradley call a discontinuous gas exchange cycle, or DGC. With no way to exchange oxygen for carbon dioxide, the latter builds up inside the insects' bodies while the former is used up.

Over time, the gas pressures change enough that the spiracles start fluttering and eventually stay fully open to allow the O_2 and CO_2 levels to adjust back to normal.

In other words, think of insects as tiny submarines: they take in full tanks of air and survive on that canned air for some period of time, before having to open the hatches to change the air again.

Humans, on the other hand, breathe by taking air in through the nose or mouth and sending that air into the lungs. The oxygen molecules are then transported to the rest of the body by the blood, which also carts the carbon dioxide to the lungs so that it can be expelled when people exhale.

Metabolic idling

Why do insects have such a different, and irregular, respiratory system?

When extremely active, insects have high metabolic rates, which means they require large quantities of oxygen. When they rest though—a period referred to in the paper as "metabolic idling"—the extra oxygen does more harm than good, allowing free radical to roam their bodies and damage the tissues.

"Physiologists have argued that the spiracles open during exercise to provide more oxygen," Hetz and Bradley write in their paper. "We would argue that they open because they are released from their need to close."

To prove their theory, the researchers studied the Atlas moth (*Attacus atlas*), which belongs to the silkworm moth family that is found in Asia and has an eight-inch wingspan.

They inserted tubes into the spiracles and measured the amount of CO_2 released by the moth, and the amount of O_2 in the trachea. Monitoring the insect's breathing pattern, they placed the moth into a CO_2-free chamber and monitored how much carbon dioxide it emitted.

Following Hetz and Bradley's hypothesis and knowing that insects prefer to have lower (20 to 25 percent) levels of oxygen in their bodies compared to their environment, the moth, in its situation, should open its spiracles briefly and then stay shut until high CO_2 levels force the moth to the flutter and then full-open spiracle phases.

Their data bear out this assumption.

Next on the agenda for these two researchers is the development of a model of how all insects breathe and why not all of them have a DGC.

In the same press release, Bradley notes that the agricultural industry could benefit from this knowledge by developing better insect control methods. If insects can hold their breaths after all, then spraying pesticide all over crops may do more harm than good.

E-mail the author at massie@massie.com.

Philsurin adopts new tech in sugarcane breeding

EXCITING developments are taking place at the Philippine Sugar Research Institute Foundation Inc.'s breeding program.

Going beyond the traditional breeding process which is time-consuming and unpredictable, Philsurin utilizes DNA microsatellite markers to fingerprint sugarcane varieties.

DNA fingerprinting

"We are the only country fingerprinting our collection," said Philsurin director general Leon Arceo.

DNA fingerprinting is a method that identifies genetic differences and similarities between organisms. Microsatellite primers or simple sequence repeats (SSRS) are genetic markers that detect specific traits in the DNA sequence.

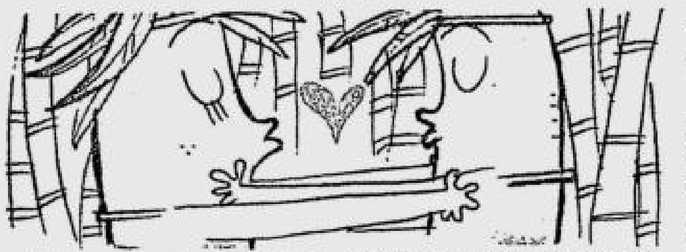
DNA or Deoxyribonucleic Acid is the substance of inheritance which determines an organism's growth, characteristics and traits. Different DNA sequences result in unique traits among organisms. These sequences are invisible to the naked eye. Two organisms may look alike, but their DNA sequences are different.

Said Arceo: "Before, sugarcane breeders determined a plant's traits according to form and structure. This method is often tedious, confusing, subjective and highly affected by the environment. DNA fingerprinting makes the selection process more precise."

For better hybrids

Breeders prefer to cross-breed sugarcane varieties with diverse genetic traits to produce better hybrids. However, studies have shown that sugarcane in the Philippines has common ancestors, leaving breeders a narrow genetic base to choose from.

"DNA fingerprinting reveals the unseen DNA sequences to sugarcane breeders, making it easier for them to identify the true genetic traits of a variety. Breeders are assured that only distantly related varieties are cross-bred for excellent hybrid vigor," said Philsurin research associate Dr. Rosendo Muyco.



In 2003, Philsurin started the process of DNA fingerprinting by collecting leaf samples from 741 sugarcane varieties planted at the Institute of Plant Breeding in the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

Ten microsatellite primer pairs were selected out of the 259 acquired by Philsurin from the International Sugarcane Microsatellite Consortium. A group created in collaboration with sugarcane research laboratories in Brazil, Colombia, France, Mauritius, South Africa, Australia and the United States, ISMC seeks to isolate microsatellite markers for sugarcane studies.

Researchers then extracted DNA from the leaf samples and quantified them at Philsurin's well-equipped laboratories in Victorias City, Negros Occidental. Amplification of DNA samples was carried out via Polymerase Chain Reaction to easily spot the difference in DNA sequence. PCR is the method used to generate unlimited copies of DNA fragments.

The DNA samples from PCR were resolved in polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis, a method that uses electric current to separate DNA fragments. The silver staining technique was used to detect the fragments.

Varieties

Eighty-one varieties fingerprinted using SSR primer pairs showed a moderate mean genetic distance of 0.65. "The result demonstrated the ability of microsatellites to identify genetic variation even in crops with a limited genetic base like sugarcane," Dr. Muyco said.

By the end of 2003, DNA samples from more than 500 varieties had been extracted, while DNA fingerprinting continues.

The utilization of DNA microsatellite markers is part of Philsurin's activities under the sugarcane variety improvement project in Southeast Asia and the Pacific which is funded by the Common Fund for Commodities.

Keeping abreast with the latest thrusts in biotechnology for sugarcane breeding, Philsurin constantly searches for ways to improve sugarcane varieties and attain self-sufficiency in sugar.

ASK THE DENTIST

Paul R. De Castro, DMD

Kind of toothpaste

DOES it really matter what kind of toothpaste you use?—Jo P.

Your toothpaste can help improve your dental health. If you are prone to having a lot of cavities, a toothpaste in combination with a mouthwash with fluoride will go a long a way in protecting your teeth.

If you have a tartar problem, a toothpaste with tartar control can help you produce less tartar that your dentist could easily remove.

E-mail your questions at dentalqs@yahoo.com.

SCISCOPE

First adult vaccination center

IMMUNIZERS in partnership with Aventis Pasteur recently launched its very first adult vaccination center in Greenhills to make vaccination more convenient and accessible to the public.

The center is the first to offer home service options, e-mail accessibility and up to 12 months deferred payments through Citibank.

Immunizers sees the importance of providing vaccination. Through the newly opened clinic, the wellness group will give extra convenience to adults. Vaccines for influenza (flu), pneumonia, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, chicken pox, meningococcemia (meningitis), typhoid, cholera-ETEC (diarrhea caused by ETEC) and soon, Japanese encephalitis are now easily accessible through a partnership with Aventis Pasteur Philippines, the world's leading vaccine manufacturer.

Immunizers adult vaccination center is located at 226 Wilson St., San Juan Metro Manila. For inquiries, call 744-5552 and 744-5553 or e-mail info@immunizers.net.

Enjoying clean, fresh air indoors

IN THE UNITED States alone, contaminated indoor air results in medical costs of about $1 billion a year and costs employers about $60 billion a year in employee sick leave and lost production.

Fortunately, indoor air quality can be greatly improved by the use of proper indoor air management systems, which trap and remove the pollutants that build up in the air.

Goodsphere air revitalizing system is an all-in-one air purifier, air humidifier, air freshener and ionizer that can cover about 150 sq m in area using a minimal electrical consumption of 70 watts. It only uses botanical essences that are 100 percent biodegradable and contains antibacterial and antifungal properties that bind unpleasant odors and pollutants while purifying the air with active ingredients.

With just the use of ordinary tap water plus 15 ml of Goodsphere essences, you and your employees can enjoy clean, fresh air.

Stress: A symptom of liver disease

ACCORDING to medical experts, one common symptom of liver disease is stress or fatigue. Stress can be felt by anyone who is suffering from liver diseases like hepatitis, liver cirrhosis, alcohol liver damage and fatty liver.

Liver diseases specifically hepatitis B is known as top killer disease while liver cirrhosis is considered end-stage liver disease because both may result to coma or death if left unchecked.

In the studies of Korean Ginseng Research Co., Livermin 870 mg soft capsule was found effective against liver diseases because of its active component known as Cardus Marianus extract, which revitalizes and rejuvenates the liver. Livermin also contains vitamins that help the liver in its recovery from the disease.

"Livermin is also effective for alcoholics, people with kidney trouble, diabetes and other internal organ diseases," studies revealed.

For more details and free consultation, call 715-2500 or 0921-4815854.

Dental symposium

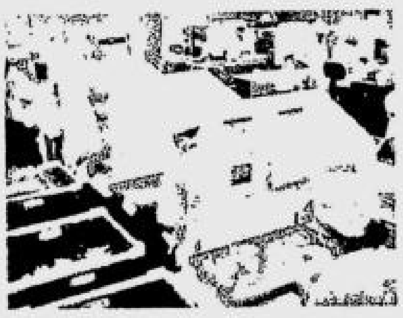
SOME 150 dentists from Philippine Dental Association (PDA) Parañaque, Las Piñas and Muntinlupa chapters attended a symposium for dental professionals conducted recently by Lamoiyan Corp.

At the symposium held at Lamoiyan's auditorium in Bicutan, dentists were encouraged to make good oral care within reach of every Filipino.

Lamoiyan, maker of Hapee and Kutitap oral care products, introduced to the market Gumtect, the most affordable oral care product of its kind.

Guest speaker Dr. Susan Mabunga of the UP College of Public Health shared with the participants the importance of fluoride and fluoride in toothpaste. She also clarified some issues on the concentration of fluoride in toothpaste and about fluorosis.

Dr. Rannier F. Reyes, president of the Philippine Society of Periodontology, discussed the marketing trends in the dental practice.



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MKT NR AYALA
BnewTwnhse/3stry/3br/2 1/2tb/grgs P3.720M up 8903461 loc 34

MARIKINA

1511m² cor lot 634-1212

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BULACAN

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CAVITE

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RIZAL

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LTW TECHNOLOGY (SUBIC) INTERNATIONAL, INC. a new company based in Subic is in urgent needs of the following top caliber applicants:

- ➢ **MARKETING AND MARKET INTELLIGENCE**
- ➢ **SALES EXECUTIVE** (Female)
- ➢ **SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT** (Female-Mandarin Speaking)

Requirements:
- Graduate of any Engineering or related course;
- At least three (3) years experience in R & D, Sales and Marketing job is a plus factor; but we welcome fresh graduates
- Knowledgeable Windows XP and Office;
- An applicants has an advantage if he/she has orientation in mechanical, electronics and electrical design or as sales or marketing
- Proficient in any of the following languages: Japanese, German, Spanish or French
- Able to communicate well and has a strong interpersonal skills;
- Dynamic, team player, goal motivated, loyal and trustworthy;
- Successful candidates shall be provided with accommodations

Qualified applicants may send their resumé to:

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER
#23 Efficiency Avenue corner Innovative St. SBIP-1, SBFZ 2222
Tel. Nos. (047) 252-2736 to 37 Fax No. (047) 252-2735
E-mail: sally@ltw-tech.com

FOR IMMEDIATE HIRING

LTW TECHNOLOGY (SUBIC) INTERNATIONAL, INC. a new company based in Subic is in urgent needs of the following top caliber applicants:

- ➢ **MOLD DESIGN ENGINEERS**
- ➢ **R & D ENGINEERS**
- ➢ **ELECTRICAL & ELECTRONICS ENGINEERS**

Requirements:
- Graduate of any Mechanical, Electrical and Electronics Engineering;
- At least three (3) years experience in mold, research or design; but we welcome fresh graduates
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- An applicants has an advantage if he/she has orientation in plastic molding, die casting, metal parts; injection tool or GPS wireless equipment telecommunications; electronic equipments;
- Excellent oral and written communication skills;
- Dynamic, team player, goal motivated, loyal and trustworthy;
- Successful candidates shall be provided with accommodations

Qualified applicants may send their resumé to:

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NOTICE TO ALL BUSINESS NAME REGISTRANTS

PURSUANT TO SECTION 12 (A) OF DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 15 SERIES OF 1990, THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY THROUGH THE BUREAU OF TRADE REGULATION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION, CANCELS FROM THE RECORD ALL BUSINESS NAME REGISTRATIONS WHICH EXPIRED AS OF **SEPTEMBER 30, 2004 EFFECTIVE APRIL 1, 2005.**

UNDER THE BUSINESS NAME LAW (ACT NO. 3883), AS AMENDED, OWNERS OR PROPRIETORS SHOULD RENEW THEIR BUSINESS NAME REGISTRATION UPON EXPIRATION THEREOF.

THIS ANNOUNCEMENT SERVES AS A FORMAL NOTICE TO ALL CONCERNED.

FOR STRICT COMPLIANCE.

12 March 2005, Makati City.

(Sgd.) Victorio Mario A. Dimagiba
Director, BTRCP

(PDI-March 12, 2005)

RUSH SALE Office Condo Unit
Cityland Condominium 10 Tower 1
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National Power Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

NPC-PSD-2005-05

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)-PSD of NPC invites interested interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements:

SCHEDULE	ITEM/DESCRIPTION	PR NUMBER	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
DATE OF BIDDING: APRIL 12, 2005; 9:00 AM			
5A1	J.O.-SUPPLY OF LABOR, MATLS, TOOLS & EQUIPT INCLUDING TECHNICAL SUPERVISION FOR THE DRYDOCKING OF PB104 STATIONED AT BO. OBRERO, ILOILO CITY	PB4-05-004 (NY)	P 18,000,000.00
DATE OF BIDDING: APRIL 12, 2005; 2:00 PM			
5B1	PARTS FOR SF6 CIRCUIT BREAKERS, 138 KV (PB2)	5LGP-04-443 (JP)	P 6,129,200.00
5B2	TURBINE BLADES, 3RD STAGE (PB2)	5LGP-05-010 (JP)	P 16,200,000.00
DATE OF BIDDING: APRIL 13, 2005; 9:00 AM			
5C1	J.O.-SUPPLY OF LABOR & MATLS FOR THE ASSISTED NATURAL REGENERATION (ANR) AT VARIOUS LOCATION AT BENGUET	UAR-05-010 (ZC)	P 1,714,505.48
DATE OF BIDDING: APRIL 13, 2005; 2:00 PM			
5D1	AIR COMPRESSOR, WORKING PRESSURE, RECIPROCATING, 2 STAGE, 2 CYLINDER, SINGLE ACTING	3TPM-05-010 (LS)	P 3,250,000.00
DATE OF BIDDIING: APRIL 14, 2005; 9:00 AM			
5E1	REPAIR KIT FOR 72" DIA. BUTTERFLY RODNEY HUNT	1MCF-04-678 (JP)	P 4,600,000.00

NOTE: A Pre-Bidding Conference will be held at the Bidding Room for the following bidding schedules on:

5A1	March 29, 2005; 9:00 AM	5D1	March 30, 2005; 2:00 PM
5B1-5B2	March 29, 2005; 2:00 PM	5E1	March 31, 2005; 9:00 AM
5C1	March 30, 2005; 9:00 AM		

Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Services Division, Materials Management Dept. of NPC, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee per schedule as indicated below starting on March 17, 2005. Issuance of eligibility and bid documents mornings only, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. up to the specified time as stated in the bid schedules above. No bid documents will be issued three (3) calendar days before the date of bidding.

SCHEDULE	P.R. APPROVED BUDGET FOR CONTRACT	PRICE OF BID DOCUMENTS PER SCHEDULE
5A1/5B2	P 18,000,000.00 / P 16,200,000.00	P 4,000.00
5B1	P 6,129,200.00	P 2,000.00
5C1	P 1,714,505.48	P 500.00
5D1/5E1	P 3,250,000.00 / P 4,600,000.00	P 1,000.00

Bids will be received at the assigned Bidding Room, PSD, MMD, NPC, Diliman, Quezon City on the date and time specified above after which Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders. Certificate of Registration issued by other NPC Offices will be honored provided that the Certification is still valid. Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with the IRR of "Republic Act 9184".

The Bidder shall furnish as part of his/her bid, a bid security in the amount equivalent to a percentage of the approved budget for the contract to be bid in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit-One Percent (1%), Surety Bond - Two and a half percent (2.5%), penal and callable on demand with 120 days validity period from the date of opening of bids issued by a Surety of Insurance Company accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commission.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to award of contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids; and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

CHAIRMAN
Bids and Awards Committee
PSD-NPC

(PDI - March 12, 2005)

PROPERTY
FOR SALE OR LONG-TERM LEASE
Three (3) storey building with mezzanine, of reinforced concrete framing and floors, & working elevator. Located at No. 17 J. de Mesa St., Little Baguio, San Juan, Metro Manila.

Total Floor Area – 2,551 sq. m.
Total Lot Area – 1,193 sq. m.

Suitable for call center operation or as distribution warehouse.

Call Tel. No. 522-1006
Contact Mr. P. Pantaleon

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Sale/Rental/Servce 8014494

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DALMTN champline w/papers 09183921360 Las Pinas area

Dog Trainer 0919-2050952

DOG TRAINER 0919-3419012

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INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

DETERGENTS 7434641

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

PETS

PCCI
336th PCCI & 337th PCCI
ALL-BREEDS DOGSHOWS
RIVERBANKS CENTER
MARIKINA CITY
MARCH 12 & 13, 2005
UNDER INT'L JUDGES
Mr. WILLIAM RANIE
(Australia)
Dr. GLADYS COWIE
(Australia)
STRICLY NO ADDENDUM
SHOW SCHEDULE
SATURDAY
March 12, 2005
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Registration and Judging of Sporting Group & Terrier Group
12:30 PM - 1:00 PM
Registration & Judging of Hound Group/ Toy Group
SUNDAY
March 13, 2005
8:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Registration and Judging of Non-Sporting Group & Herding Group
12:30 PM - 5:00 PM
Registration & Judging of Working Group
CORPORATE SPONSORS:

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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10yr Term Min 2T 0920-9090749

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that stock certificate No. 50820 issued by Ayala Corp for 179,050 shares of Ms. Lourdes Teng has been reported lost. (PDI- March 5, 12 & 19, 2005)

PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late MIGUEL B. DELA PAZ was extra-judicially settled among his heirs as per Doc 83, Page 17, Book IX, Series of 2004 under Notary Public Atty. Rafael B. Hilao, Jr. (PDI-Feb. 26, Mar. 5, & 12, 2005)

Notice is hereby given that the extra-judicial settlement with waiver of rights of estate of the late BENJAMIN PAGSISIHAN is made and entered among his heirs as per Doc. No. 402, Page No. 81, Book 22, Series of 2005 under Notary Public Atty. Helson Laluces of Alabang.
(PDI - March 5, 12 & 19, 2005)

AUCTION SALE

CY LOPEZ
PAWNSHOP INC.
CAEG Bldg. #7611 Dela Rosa St.,Makati City #602 JP Rizal St. Makati City #15 Gen. Santos Ave. lower Bicutan Taguig Real St. Almanza Uno Las Pinas City will hold an Auction Sale on MARCH 19, 2005 at 9:00am including all items pawned up to OCTOBER 2004. - V. Zamora Jr. lic. Auctioneer.
(PDI - MARCH 12, 2005)

BUSINESS FOR SALE

BEAUTY PARLOR 4 SALE 4156051

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MALE

DRIVER STAY IN 9395640

Production Mgr. Pellets Factory 5224435 / 09206262141

WANTED
URGENT MALE
FRESH GRADUATE
Accounting major & computer literate for Batangas assignment. Free board & lodging send biodata application to P. O. Box 7079 ADC NAIA, Pasay City or
Fax 823-3046
e-mail:mov@albargroup.com.ph

FEMALE

Dressmaker, Beautician and Domestic Helper 5224435 / 09206262141

Need BPassor BEEd Tchr 6550609

MALE/FEMALE

BSP•BSN•PT•MT
Any Allied Health Grads up to P45T/ Mol 8522818

CAREGIVER T-5280722 / 5280730

COOK-KITCHEN-STAFF-2YRS. EXP. ITALIAN COOKING 6722320

CUTTER/SEWER 7259647

Lady Dentist UE Graduate 2004 Board Passer Aesthetics Dentistry Sta Lucia East Grand-mall 3/F Ph3 Cainta Rizal

MALE/FEMALE

MANAGEMENT TRAINEE OFFICE STAFF Call 6347802, 6331753 Look for Mr. Jorge Centeno START ASAP

MANUCURISTA
URGENT CALL 9131603

St. Mark Educ Ctr Mkna needs BSEED Math majors 943-2626 / 681-9569

WE ARE IN NEED OF:
ACCOUNTING CLERK (F)
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Contact Ms. JOHANNA at 359-0232 / 0920-6110269

INVITATION TO BID "AS IS WHERE IS"

Damaged Motor Vehicles

1980 Mitsubishi Lancer / NLB-556
2003 Toyota Corolla Altis / XFX-491
1999 Honda Civic / WHH-403

For particulars,
call Philam Ins. Co., Inc./
Dick Cariño. Tel.#878-54-57

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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
MARITIME INDUSTRY AUTHORITY
Cebu Maritime Regional Office
Ground Floor CCCI Center, cor. 11th & 13th Avenues,
North Reclamation Area, Cebu City

Case No CMRO 05-015

RE: Application for grant of Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) to operate a liner service in the operation of its ships in its applied route for the carriage of passengers only and to charge deregulated rates and to operate under a deregulated schedule of trips pursuant to Republic Act No. 9295 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

OCEAN FAST FERRIES, INCORPORATED
Applicant.
x---x

SECOND ORDER

This refers to the Application for grant of Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC) to operate the following ships in its routes, under the following sailing frequencies, schedule of trips and rates:

FOR LINER OPERATION:

Name of Ships	Service/s offered/to be offered
M/V OCEAN JET 1	Passengers only
M/V OCEAN JET 2	- do -
M/V OCEAN JET 3	- do -
M/V OCEAN JET 5	- do -
M/V OCEAN JET 6	- do -

Route/s to be served:
Cebu City – Tubigon, Bohol and vice versa; Bredco 2, Bacolod City – Iloilo City and vice versa; Hilongos, Leyte – Cebu City and vice versa; Cebu-Tagbilaran – Dumaguete – Tagbilaran – Cebu – Tagbilaran – Cebu – Tagbilaran – Larena – Tagbilaran – Cebu – Tagbilaran – Cebu – Tagbilaran – Larena – Plaridel – Larena – Tagbilaran – Cebu

Sailing Frequencies/Schedule

Departure			Arrival		
Port	Day	Time	Port	Day	Time
Cebu	Daily	6:00 AM	Tubigon	Daily	6:50 AM
Tubigon	Daily	7:10 AM	Cebu	Daily	8:00 AM
Cebu	Daily	8:20 AM	Tubigon	Daily	9:10 AM
Tubigon	Daily	9:30 AM	Cebu	Daily	10:20 AM
Cebu	Daily	10:40 AM	Tubigon	Daily	11:30 AM
Tubigon	Daily	11:50 AM	Cebu	Daily	12:40 PM
Cebu	Daily	1:00 PM	Tubigon	Daily	1:50 PM
Tubigon	Daily	2:10 PM	Cebu	Daily	3:00 PM
Cebu	Daily	3:20 PM	Tubigon	Daily	4:10 PM
Tubigon	Daily	4:50 PM	Cebu	Daily	5:40 PM
Cebu	Daily	6:00 PM	Tubigon	Daily	6:50 PM
Tubigon	Daily	7:10 PM	Cebu	Daily	8:00 PM
Bredco 2	Daily	5:30 AM	Iloilo City	Daily	6:40 AM
Iloilo	Daily	7:10 AM	Bredco 2	Daily	8:20 AM
Bredco 2	Daily	8:50 AM	Iloilo City	Daily	10:00 AM
Iloilo	Daily	10:30 AM	Bredco 2	Daily	11:20 AM
Bredco 2	Daily	12:10 PM	Iloilo	Daily	1:20 PM
Iloilo	Daily	1:50 PM	Bredco 2	Daily	3:00 PM
Bredco 2	Daily	3:30 PM	Iloilo	Daily	4:30 PM
Iloilo	Daily	4:45 PM	Bredco 2	Daily	5:45 PM
Hilongos	Daily	8:00 AM	Cebu City	Daily	10:00 AM
Cebu City	Daily	11:00 AM	Hilongos	Daily	1:00 PM
Hilongos	Daily	2:00 PM	Cebu City	Daily	4:00 PM
Cebu City	Daily	5:30 PM	Hilongos	Daily	8:00 PM
Cebu	Daily	6:00 AM	Tagbilaran	Daily	7:30 AM
Tagbilaran	Daily	7:55 AM	Dumaguete	Daily	9:25 AM
Dumaguete	Daily	9:45 AM	Tagbilaran	Daily	11:15 AM
Tagbilaran	Daily	11:30 AM	Cebu	Daily	1:00 PM
Cebu	Daily	1:30 PM	Tagbilaran	Daily	3:00 PM
Tagbilaran	Daily	3:30 PM	Cebu	Daily	5:00 PM
Cebu	Daily	5:30 PM	Tagbilaran	Daily	7:00 PM
Tagbilaran	Daily	7:25 PM	Larena	Daily	8:45 PM
Larena	Daily	6:00 AM	Tagbilaran	Daily	7:20 AM
Tagbilaran	Daily	7:35 AM	Cebu	Daily	9:15 AM
Cebu	Daily	9:35 AM	Tagbilaran	Daily	11:15 AM
Tagbilaran	Daily	11:35 AM	Larena	Daily	12:50 PM
Larena	Daily	1:05 PM	Plaridel	Daily	3:05 PM
Plaridel	Daily	3:25 PM	Larena	Daily	5:35 PM
Larena	Daily	5:35 PM	Tagbilaran	Daily	6:55 PM
Tagbilaran	Daily	7:10 PM	Cebu	Daily	8:50 PM

Rates on a per Link Basis

Links	Rates
Cebu City – Tubigon Bohol	P 330
Bredco 2, Bacolod City – Iloilo City	P 300
Hilongos, Leyte – Cebu City	P 590
Cebu – Tagbilaran	P 550
Cebu – Dumaguete	P 800
Tagbilaran – Dumaguete	P 580
Cebu – Larena	P 710
Tagbilaran – Larena	P 570
Cebu – Plaridel	P 910
Larena – Plaridel	P 500
Plaridel – Tagbilaran	P 730

The Applicant shall cause the publication of this Order once in any of the five (5) major newspaper of national circulation in the Philippines or in a newspaper of local circulation, as applicable.

The Applicant shall likewise simultaneously cause the posting of this Order in a conspicuous place at the affected ports, ships, Applicant's premises, passenger terminal/s and ticketing offices as applicable.

The Applicant shall present the jurisdictional, qualification and documentary requirements in a summary proceeding to be conducted on 15 March 2005 at 1:30 PM at the Conference Room, Cebu Maritime Regional Office, Ground Floor, CCCI Bldg cor. 11th & 13th Avenues, North Reclamation Area, Cebu City, which is within seven (7) days from the date of publication/posting.

The Applicant shall be required to make a written Formal Offer of Evidence (FOE), afterwhich, the application is deemed submitted for resolution/decision.

WITNESS the Honorable Administrator, VICENTE T. SUAZO, JR., this 10th day of March 2005 at Cebu City, Philippines.

(Sgd.) GLENN G. CABAÑEZ
Regional Director

(PDI - March 12, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region XIV (Serving ARMM), Cotabato City
Tel No. 421-2407, FAX No. 421-2128

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) invites all interested LABOR CONTRACTORS to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Handling (Procurement/Distribution/Inflow/In-Warehouse Movement, etc...) of 2005 NFA rice and palay at the following areas:

PROVINCE/WAREHOUSE	ESTIMATED VOLUME (In Bags of 50 Kilos) TO BE HANDLED,	Approved Budget Cost (Ph.P)
MAGUINDANAO		
LOT 1, SPGC/MPG, Tacurong City	18,000	54,000.00
LOT 2, GID, Sharif Aguak	119,000	357,000.00
LOT 3, CIC, Cotabato City	30,000	90,000.00
LOT 4, R & B, Upi	47,300	142,080.00
LOT 5, Philtrade V, S. Kudarat	180,000	540,000.00
LOT 6, RPA, Parang	164,640	464,040.00
	594,040	1,647,120.00
LANAO DEL SUR		
LOT 7, Marawi City	96,340	289,020.00
LOT 8, Malabang	23,360	70,080.00
	119,700	359,100.00
BASILAN		
LOT 9, GID, Isabela City	282,200	846,600.00
SULU		
LOT 10, GID, Jolo	19,750	56,875.00
TAWI-TAWI		
LOT 11, GID, Bongao	78,000	234,000.00
AGGREGATE TOTAL:	1,048,690	3,143,695.00

The Handling (Procurement/Dispersal/Distribution/In-Warehouse/Integrated Services, etc...) activity calls for the supply of labor force services only. Bids may be by lot of choice, by lots (more than one lot) or the entire lot.

Schedule of Bidding Activities:

Particulars	Date/Time
1. Distribution of Eligibility and Bid documents	March 14 - 21, 2005
2. Pre-Bid Conference	April 6, 2005, 9:00 AM
3. Deadline of submission of eligibility requirements and bid forms	April 18, 2005, 8:30 AM
4. Opening of bids	April 18,2005, 9:00 AM

All interested parties in the bidding, must be duly registered labor contractor. Application forms for eligibility to bid, list of eligibility requirements and bid tenders shall be issued upon payment of non-refundable fee of Ph.P 2,000.00 to the RBAC, NFA, Region XIV, Cotabato City on the date and scheduled time stated above.

The venue for the pre-bid conference and bidding proper will be at NFA Conference Room, NFA Office, ORC Compound, Gov. Gutierez Ave., Cotabato City.

Bidding procedures shall be governed by RA 9184 and its IRR-A, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act as provided in the instruction to bidders.

NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY/INFORMALITY OF THE BIDS RECEIVED AND TO ACCEPT ONLY SUCH BIDS WHICH ARE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) OFELIA M. SERO
Asst Regional Manager and
Chairman, RBAC

(PDI - March 12 & 19, 2005)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) invites authorized service providers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the provision of the following items for use at NFA from May 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005

LOT	ITEM	APPROVED BUDGET
1	Frame Relay Service	P2,666,660.00
2	Internet Service	P333,320.00

The schedule of bidding activities is as follows:

March 14 to 28, 2005	Issuance of List of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Documents and Submission of Letter of Intent
March 30, 2005 (10:00 AM)	Pre-bidding Conference, 10th Floor, NFA Boardroom
April 14, 2005 (9:00 - 9:45 AM)	Receipt and Opening of Bids, 10th Floor, NFA Boardroom Submission of eligibility documents and bid proposals
(10:00 AM)	Opening of eligibility documents and bid proposals

Eligibility criteria includes among others that the value of the prospective bidder's largest single contract within the last three (3) years, adjusted to current prices, completed within the period and similar to the contract to be bid, must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

Eligibility requirements and bidding documents may be secured from the Office of the BAC Secretariat, 5th Floor Tengsico Building, National Food Authority, 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City upon payment of P5,000.00 non refundable fee. The Letter of Intent specifying the type of service to be offered should be submitted to the BAC Secretariat not later than the close of business hours of March 28, 2005. Bids for any or all lots should conform with the Bidder's Letter of Intent. For further inquiries, please call Mr. Jose D. Chua at Tel No. 712-6813 (direct line) or Tel. No. 712-3341 up to 49 local 6923.

NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY REQUIRED FORMALITY IN THE BIDS RECEIVED, PROVIDED THAT SUCH WAIVER DOES NOT REFER TO A MAJOR DEVIATION IN A BID AND TO ACCEPT ONLY SUCH BIDS WHICH ARE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY.

(Sgd.) PEDRO S. HERNANDO, JR.
Deputy Administrator & BAC Chair

(PDI - March 12 & 19, 2005)

We've added another dignified service to keep the memory of your departed loved ones.

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OBITUARIES

In Loving Memory
on the
12th Death Anniversary
of

ATTY. JOSEFINA SORIANO BILAR

who passed away on March 12, 1993

Her husband **Felix**; children **Eric & Lynn, Nesty & Joyce, Marilu & Budjie Garcia**; grandchildren **Bea, Yammy & Matt, Eysbelle, Elinoir, Pocholo & Budjo**; in-laws and relatives request the readers to pray for her eternal repose.

In Memoriam

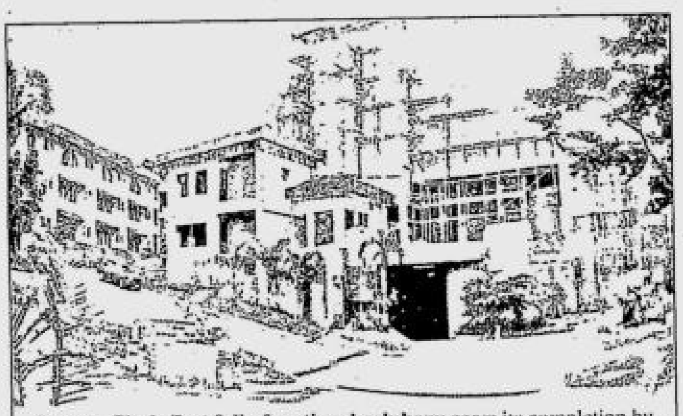
CHONA STA. ROMANA-NARCISO

12 March 1953 – 25 February 1988

Her son **Victor**; sister and brothers **Neni** and **Elfren, Chito** and **Nancy, Nelin**; nieces and nephews **Tanya, Roel, Aina, Norman, Christopher**, and all those dear to **Chona** request your continuing prayers for truth, justice and peace.

Chona will be fondly remembered at the 6:00 am and 6:30 pm celebrations of the Holy Mass today at the Jesus the Divine Healer Parish, Tahanan Village, Parañaque.

Your support of the Ma. Corazon Lucero Sta. Romana Commemorative Scholarship administered by the St. Scholastica Research and Development Foundation will be most appreciated.


Quezon City's first fully functional colubary nears its completion by the end of 2005. **The Columbary** is a modern – day depository for the cremated remains of the departed. Photo shows **The Columbary** in its finishing stage of construction. **Open House on March 12 & 13 (Sat & Sun). Avail of BIG DISCOUNTS.** For inquiries, call **425-1508/09, 426-6965/66, 927-7325/46.** www.thecolumbary.com.ph. PAID ADV.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT
MESSAGE OF THANKS
DEATH ANNIVERSARY
REQUIEMS
FREE OBIT DESIGN

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"Come to Me,
all you who are weary
and burdened, and I will
give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

"The pain is gone... the hurt no longer felt...
the smile... the Laughter... are now part of the past... but...
THE MEMORIES WILL REMAIN"

MARIO F. PASCUAL, SR.

Has passed away on March 10, 2005
at 1:10 PM at the age of 76.

He is survived by sister **Dory**, in-laws **Laure & Boy, Pat & Boner, Gloria**, children **Tom & Baby, Edeline & Sonny, Junior, Elaine, Cata, Perry & Jojo, Rocky & Josie** and **Raul**

Grandchildren:	*Great Grandchildren:*
Che, Pia and **John Andrew** **Rowell** and **Rhyan** **Edwin, Marielle** and **Edcor** **Pao** and **Janica** **Adrian**	**Dimples, Miggy, Mickey, Clyde, Carlo, Mig, Daenna, Kiel** **Ia** and **Sean**

His remains lie in state at Chapel #5, La Funeraria Paz, #143 Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on March 13 after the 1:00 PM Necrological Service at the Holy Cross Memorial Park.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."
2 Timothy 4

Those who love her
wish to announce the demise of

PACITA DE LOS REYES PHILLIPS y ONGSIACO

14 November 1911 – 10 March 2005

Holy Mass will be celebrated
on 12 March 2005 at 6:00 p.m at the
Capilla dela Virgen
Santuario de San Antonio
Forbes Park, Makati City

DR. ROSARIO T. ALMEDA ED. D.

(former principal of Aurora Quezon Elementary School, San Andres-Manila)

Peacefully joined her Creator and her beloved husband Ricardo, Jr.
on March 10, 2005 at the age of 74.

Her children **Raymond**, **Rene** and Chit, **Ricky** and Kittyn, **Gina** and Hector; grandchildren Charlyn, Richard, Carmeli and Roselin request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie at the Jose Rizal Chapel, La Funeraria Paz, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Monday, March 14, 2005 at 9:00 a.m. at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City.

"Lord, You know what is best for all of us.
help us to be resigned to Your Will."
Gerardine's Prayer

Our Dearest Papang

DR. JESUS FERI FERAREN

of Vigan, Ilocos Sur & BF Homes Parañaque

peacefully returned to our Heavenly Father on March 7, 2005 at the age of 97,
*and joyfully joins his loving children **Baby Grace Mita, Salvador, Samson** and **Gerardine**.*

His devoted & caring wife **Natividad**, and loving children: **Grace Mita (†), Salvador (†), Samson (†), Serafin, Sr. Natividad de Jesus, SPC (Gloria/Mita), Grace, Gemma, Gerardine (†), Germaine** and **Germeline Alice Virginia (Alvi)**, sister, **Juanita**, sister-in-law **Matilde (†)**, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives and friends request prayers for Papang's eternal rest, peace and happiness in Heaven.

His remains lie in state at Fr. Wilmann SJ Suite, Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Sucat, Road, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Saturday, March 12, 2005 at Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat Road, Parañaque City after the 1:30 p.m. Mass at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels.

MA. GRIZELDA N. MAULEON

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord
last February 16, 2005.

She is survived by husband **Rafael**; children **Ma. Paz, Anna Ma., Rika Ma.**; brothers **Roland** and **Jojo**; sister **Winnie**; grandchildren **Bianca, Gavin** and relatives.

Her remains lie in state at Chapels 1 & 2, Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City this Sunday, March 13. Mass will be held at 5:00 p.m.

Interment will be on Monday, March 14, 2005 after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City.

We design OBITUARIES for free.

BUSINESS

Lifting of harvest ban on rattan, vines urged

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE EXPORT Development Council has urged the government to exclude forest products used by the furniture manufacturing industry from the total log ban.

The EDC, a think tank composed of government and private sector representatives, said that while it supported Malacañang's campaign to protect forests and tree plantations, the blanket ban has adversely affected legitimate enterprises, such as the furniture industry.

The furniture industry is one of the country's dollar earners with last year's take placed at $294 million, up 5.75 percent from $278 million in 2003.

"The suspension of logging or cutting permits of legitimate enterprises should be immediately lifted to avoid further disruption in the supply chain for furniture manufacturing," EDC chair and Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos said.

Santos said EDC recommended the exclusion of minor forest products from the ban, such as rattan, vines, bark and fibers, as these did not endanger the forest cover.

He added that the group was also pushing for the lowering of tariff on imported wood to help furniture manufacturers and exporters cope with the loss of local sources of raw materials in the face of a total log ban.

"The most affected sector in the export community (under a log ban regime) is the furniture and home furnishing industry which is one of the country's steady source of export revenues," Santos said.

"Pallet manufacturers who service the locators of export processing zones as well as the plywood industry—which is beginning to go into exports—are also affected," he added.

EDC would also request the government to extend more incentives to industrial tree farming ventures to encourage the planting of the more valuable exotic tropical hardwood species.

DTI data showed that the furniture industry employs about 1.8 million workers, and involves around 2,500 exporters aside from 10,000 manufacturers catering to the domestic market.

Late in February, the Chamber of Furniture Industries of the Philippines said it remained upbeat on the industry's performance this year with projections of "modest gains, more sales, and stable employment and business opportunities."

CFIP president Nick de Lange had said the group's members were " raring to expand, push the Philippine economy forward and be of help to as many entrepreneurs and workers as we could possibly can."

Furniture exports are shipped to the United States, Japan, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom and Australia.

THE PHILIPPINES INVESTMENT CONFERENCE
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EUROMONEY CONFERENCE. Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. managing director Chris Nelson (second from right) talks about the fair treatment the Philippine government gave his company's $300-million investment in the country. Nelson was one of the guest panelists at the opening of the Philippine Investment Conference at the Mactan Shangri-La Reosrt Hotel. WIth him are (from left) Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II, president Ayala Corp.; Tony Tan Caktiong, chairman Jolibee Foods; Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri; Mark Johnson, editor of Euromoney; Claire McLetchie, investment director, Standard Life Investment and Manuel Pangilinan, chairman PLDT.

Gov't has no spare cash to buy San Miguel shares, Purisima says

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN Miguel Corp. kicked off its stock rights offer last Thursday, and the government still does not have the cash to buy the additional shares needed to preserve its 41-percent interest in the food and beverage giant.

"My statements have been very clear on this, the national government, as represented by the DOF, does not have the spare resources to invest in stocks, and we will not guarantee nor provide resources for this purpose," Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said on the sidelines of a PhilEquity Fund launch at the Philam Tower yesterday.

He said that it was up to the pension funds—Social Security System and Government Service Insurance System—and the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) to cough up the roughly P5-8 billion needed to buy additional shares in SMC through the stock rights program.

"If SSS and GSIS, in the execution of their investment and asset allocation strategy, think that it is wise, we will go ahead," he said.

Purisima has been tasked by the President to oversee the sale of the government's 41-percent equity in San Miguel—27 percent from the Coconut Industry Investment Fund and 7 percent each from the SSS and GSIS—to generate funds to further develop the coconut industry.

SMC is raising P17.8 billion through the issuance of 285 million additional shares, a move that would bring it closer to its goal to become one of Asia's top ten firms.

The offer period started last March 10 and will close on March 31.

San Miguel is offering, by way of preemptive rights, 173.4 million class A common shares at P54.70 a share and 111.2 million class B shares from treasury stock at P74.74 apiece.

Preemptive rights allow existing shareholders to get first crack at buying the additional shares before these are sold to other interested investors.

The additional shares to be issued represent roughly 10 percent or 284.6 million shares out of San Miguel's 2.846 billion total outstanding shares.

SMC's major shareholders include San Miguel chair Eduardo Cojuangco (18 percent), Kirin Brewery (20 percent) and retail king Henry Sy (6 percent).

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PROPERTY

Editor **Cesar D. Mangawang**

P31.7B IN PROPERTY LOSSES

Fires raze the equivalent of 58,190 classrooms

By Tessa R. Salazar

FROM 1998 to 2003, a total of 50,413 fires were reported nationwide.

Property losses due to fire, according to a six-year study of the Bureau of Fire Protection's Public Information Office, totaled P31.7 billion—enough to burn down 58,190 classrooms.

The BFP also said that every year, more than 100 Filipinos die in fires, and thousands more suffer as families lose their homes and valuables, while hundreds more are injured.

Overall, though, the estimated damages wrought by fires in 2004 nationwide have declined by 22.58 percent to just over P3.27 billion compared to 2003 damages estimated at over P4.22 billion.

Structural fires include commercial, industrial, and residential fires.

At present, the Bureau of Fire Protection doesn't have separate data for fire damages on each structural type.

"More than half of the 4,762 reported cases of structural fires nationwide from January to December 2004 originated from residential areas," said Fire Supt. Bobby V. Baruelo, BFP public information services head.

In a fire statistics comparative report, structural fires still top the number of reported cases, followed by forest/grass fires at 2,240, rubbish (garbage) at 677, vehicular/ship fires at 433, chemical fires at 61 and other types at 1,994.

Top causes

The top causes of fire have been electrical, open flames (such as lit candles), combined

FIRES/B2-2

Safety tips

IS your house a fire hazard?

Our house becomes the breeding ground of fire hazards if we let it be. We cook in our homes. Children are tempted to play with matches and candles.

We may also choose not to have licensed electrical engineers conduct fire safety inspections, since our private houses are not commercial establishments.

So, fire prevention at home really depends on the residents. Here are simple but sensible advice from the Bureau of Fire Protection:

- Put phone numbers of your nearest fire department near your phone.
- Eliminate fire hazards through good housekeeping: dispose waste paper, rubbish and other flammable materials regularly.
- Keep matches out of children's reach.
- Oil or gas lamps and candles should be placed away from curtains. Do not light them near windows, fans or where children or pets may topple them. Put out the flame before going to bed.
- Do not keep flammable materials like gasoline, alcohol and paint inside the house.
- Regularly check your electrical installations, and have all frayed wirings and electrical fixtures changed or repaired by a licensed electrician.
- Do not overload electrical circuits by putting additional lights and appliances.
- Blown fuses should not be replaced with coins, wires or any other metal.
- Never leave a lit cigarette/cigar/pipe unattended. This may fall on flammable materials.
- Keep a first-aid kit handy.

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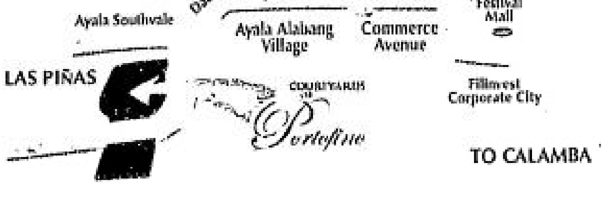

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Places of worship

LA VIRGEN de Fatima Chapel, Kawilihan Village, Pasig

STA. Maria Dela Strada Bell Tower, Quezon City

MAN'S sweetest aim in life is to commune with his Creator, to be in a place of unity and peace, celebrating Him with other people. In the dizzying pace of today's world, finding such a place, albeit limited and temporary, is a goal of many well-meaning communities.

LIVING ARCHITECTURE

Marcos de Guzman Jr.

With the uniqueness of each person and the special dynamics of every group, the reality of such a place can be just as varied and challenging. This is manifested in the places of worship we have. built in His honor.

Designs based on postcards

Our old churches, built by the Spaniards hundreds of years ago, were based on "postcards" or pictures of then existing churches in the west. Due to lack of options in the kind of construction materials available, some of our old churches were made mostly of concrete and lacking in steel reinforcements. This is why most have been destroyed or severely damaged by earthquakes and other unfortunate events.

Fortunately, some have stood the test of time and grant us a peek at the grandeur of the European churches of yore. In its own way, the beauty and character of our local churches became priceless, even though these are not as refined as their western counterparts.

One can feel the same awe inside the old churches in Batanes and Iloilo as in the churches of Spain and France. Of course, the present community's practical involvement in these churches is only as "caretaker" or steward. The focus is in preserving a heritage and building the community around one's "heirloom."

A shared dream

For new communities, the design of a church is not the sole idea of the architect commissioned to do it. It is usually a dream shared by many. The ideas suggested by concerned individuals are processed, analyzed and gelled to create one single idea, on which the overall "feel" or style is based.

This idea or concept must be adhered to, even after the church has been completed and through subsequent renovations. The end result is usually the vision of the community it serves. It rises from the ground and must remain part of it.

Some churches blend with the surroundings and some stand out. But in both cases, it represents the community it supports.

The beauty of the church does not just come from how it looks, or how much money was spent in its construction, nor the kind of materials used. It comes from the effort in building it. This is because the church is not made solely from stone and bricks, but of people with a common desire and a focus.

This is what gives truth to the words of the blind visionary, Helen Keller, "The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."

Beauty is evident even from conceptualization to completion and throughout usage: the attitude and perseverance of the people; the teamwork and cooperation; the source of funding and the creativity in raising it.

Community places of worship

An example of this is a beautiful chapel we have in Kawilihan Village in Pasig. I don't claim it's beautiful because I designed it but because of the people who helped build and continue to support it. Like in many villages, the Sunday service was originally celebrated inside a clubhouse, but everyone felt that solemnity was severely lacking. This prompted Kuya Ben, one of the residents, to dream of having a chapel, so much so that he volunteered to advance the expenses.

We knew that the residents needed to get involved, so we intentionally extended the construction period to allow more people to participate in the project. By the end of construction, everything had been paid up and the community had its chapel, now known as La Virgen de Fatima Chapel.

The chapel brings the community closer. Because of it, the village became an ideal place for us to raise a family. It remained beautiful because of the people, like Tita Ruby, who have dedicated their lives to making sure that everything in this little place is in order. With the full support of the Sta. Rosa de Lima Parish, we even have daily evening Masses that are well attended.

In a development south of Manila known as Ayala West Grove Heights, Ayala Land has allocated close to a hectare of prime property across the Westgrove Plaza. I was asked to design a church for the community. It is not merely for the homeowners in the subdivision, but for the rest of the area as well.

The church will be big enough to accommodate 600 people and is expandable up to 1,000 once the community has grown. This would definitely benefit the areas around it.

We hope that others will follow these examples, whether it is a small project by the homeowners themselves or a bigger one by concerned developers. It will surely promote a closer, warmer community life and an ideal setting for celebration and camaraderie.

I'm sure there are a lot of generous and willing hearts out there that would be willing to spearhead and undertake projects like this. I encourage my fellow architects to get involved and use your talents for such a worthwhile purpose.

French hotelier named GM for Ayala Greenfields Estates Golf and Leisure Club

NEWLY appointed general manager of the Ayala Greenfield Estates Golf and Leisure Club Laurent Lamasuta readies to take a shot at first.

THE WELCOMING breeze that swirled throughout the scenic environment of Ayala Greenfield Estates was enough to create an impression among lot owners and guests that living here would be extraordinary.

This is just one among the many reasons French hotelier Laurent Lamasuta took on the challenge of making Ayala Greenfield Estates Golf and Leisure Club the finest and most famous in the golf community.

Wide experience

At the Ayala Greenfield Estates' first golf tournament held last Jan. 29, Laurent led lot owners in officially opening the front nine of the all-weather championship golf course designed by renowned golf course architect Robert Trent Jones Jr.

Laurent brings to Ayala Greenfield Estates Golf and Leisure Club his wide experience in hotel and resort management, gained from years of working in top hotels and restaurants in London, Nice, Paris, Dubai, Bahrain and Manila.

Coming from a hotelier's family with six years of hotel management studies and rising from the ranks, Laurent knows the value of customer service.

Only the best

Says Laurent: "We want only the best for our customers. On top of accessibility, valued amenities and facilities, our customers can expect high-quality service at the club. The last thing we want is to fall short in meeting their needs or expectations."

He is also keen at working on the details of the service aspect and expressed confidence on the readiness of the club to accommodate the influx of golfers when it opens by the latter part of the year.

"We will not operate with less than 100 percent service quality because we are committed to ensuring our customers the best golfing experience," he says.

Haven

The Ayala Greenfield Estates Golf and Leisure Club is set to become a haven for sports recreational activities, not only for golfers, but for their families as well. It will provide enjoyment on and off the greens with such facilities as badminton courts, billiards, themed bowling lanes and resort pools.

Ayala Greenfield Estates is an exclusive residential community in Calamba, Laguna, ideal for families looking for an active-leisure lifestyle. Membership at the Golf and Leisure Club is exclusive to lot owners of the subdivision.

Apart from the amenities of the club, lot owners and guests can also enjoy playing at the indoor basketball, tennis and badminton courts, swimming at the infinity pool and working out at the gym of the Village Clubhouse.

Nature lovers and outdoor buffs will find its 15-hectare Nature Park— with fishing lagoon, play field, nine-hole putting green, tree house, picnic huts, hiking and biking trails—equally exciting and invigorating.

For inquiries, please call 848-5000; log on to www.ayalaland.com.ph, or e-mail ayalasales@ayalaland.com.ph.

Fires raze the equivalent...

From page B2-1

heat (bonfires, gas fires), cigarette butts, fireworks/explosives/sparks (during New Year, for example), flammable liquids (paints, fuels) and LPG tanks (stoves).

In 2004, electrical causes topped the originators of fires, accounting for 2,977 fires. However, this was a slight decrease from 2003, which had 3,018 reported cases.

Accidental fires in 2004 were reported at 7,245. Intentional fires were reported at 256. Currently, 2,656 reported fires are still under investigation.

Violations

According to the BFP, preventive measures are often violated by residents of slum areas and even officials of schools.

"Even school buildings' fire exits are now often occupied with seats for parents who wait for their children. There are not even directional signs, no emergency lights," said Baruelo during inspections on public and private schools.

BFP inspections also reveal that schools even renovate and build extensions that affect easy access to fire exits. It is only after BFP officials have made periodic inspections that the alterations are noticed.

"How many establishments renovate every year?" asked Baruelo.

Fire prevention awareness

Baruelo said the BFP has provided modules for fire prevention awareness to primary and secondary level students. BFP has also revealed it is now eyeing to train junior fire marshals.

Residents in slum areas are often guilty of making faulty electrical connections such as "octopus" plugs (with as many as eight appliances connected to just one socket). There is also an increasing habit of coupling appliances with substandard lines for the electrical connections. Extension cords themselves are connected to other extension cords.

"The electrical lines *(kawads)* used for residences are small, and these get heated easily (especially in octopus connections)," said Baruelo to the INQUIRER.

He added that materials used in the construction of shanties are light materials that are easily combustible.

"Houses here don't even undergo zoning, thus there are no existing firewalls. Their electrical installations haven't been checked, since the owners don't have building permits."

Residents' stubbornness adds fuel to the potential fire. Baruelo complained that people wouldn't listen even with his office's constant reminders. He said that during fires, particularly in the slum areas, the narrow alleys are impassable to fire trucks, and people would often get in the way of the responding firemen.

Fire safety awareness

"It seems people don't listen anymore. There's public apathy. So we're conducting projects in schools. We're conducting fire safety awareness and fire prevention sessions within the school system. We want children to become catalysts of change," said Baruelo.

The BFP and the Department of Education is launching the Junior Fire Marshall in public and private schools. It involves training students on how to be fire prevention officers within and outside the school.

Robinsons Homes, Security Bank to develop prime Davao City property

A PRIME 10.5-hectare property of the Security Bank Corp. on J.P. Laurel Avenue in Lanang, Davao City, will soon develop into an upscale residential subdivision with commercial strips, featuring sassy chic and garden bloom themes.

Robinsons Homes Inc. (RHI) has signed a joint-venture agreement on the property with SBC. RHI president Lance Y. Gokongwei said the project is the seventh of RHI joint ventures with landowners and big corporations in the country.

Located between the city's main urban cluster and the new Davao International Airport, the property will have an average lot cut of 200 square meters for residential lots and 300 sq m for commercial lots, with a clubhouse, a swimming pool, central open space adopting an American "flower fields" character, landscaped parks and gardens, and a multipurpose playcourt.

Architectural group

Robinsons Homes commissioned the services of world-renowned architectural group Palafox Associates to draw up the project's master plan.

The joint RHI-SBC effort is expected to produce the highest standards in architectural designs by balancing functionality of space with creative elements. Architect Felino Palafox has designed master plans for a number of residential and commercial hubs in this country and abroad.

SBC president Alberto S. Villarosa and Gokongwei led their company officials in signing the joint-venture contract. Other signatories were SBC chair Frederick Y. Dy, executive chair Rafael F. Simpao Jr., FVP Eveylene C. Sison and VP Richard Yu, while other RHI signatories were EVP Frederick D. Go, SVP and general manager Marilu M. Alferez and VP Manuel D. Deus.

Projects

The Lanang property is the second major development project in Davao City. The first project, Gokongwei said, is the 38-hectare Robinsons Highlands, located on the Buhangin Diversion Road, already considered a landmark in Davao City. All the remaining commercial and residential lots worth P263 million have been sold out in mid-2004.

Gokongwei said the six earlier RHI joint-venture projects covered big parcels in Cavite, Pampanga, Davao and Cagayan de Oro City.

Better partner

SBC's Villarosa said the bank "could not have found a better and a more committed partner to develop and sell the property." The joint project is "a first" for SBC, "only the beginning of equally productive endeavors together," he said.

RHI is a subsidiary of the Gokongwei Group of Companies, which business interests range from branded consumer goods, petrochemicals, real estate, telecommunications, banking and finance, textile and airlines.

The group entered horizontal development in 1995 by converting JG Summit Holdings' properties into affordable to mid-cost residential cum commercial subdivisions. In a short span of time, it has developed a number of projects in major regions in Luzon to as far as Davao City and Cagayan de Oro City in Mindanao.

With a reputation for completing quality projects on time and on specifications, Robinsons Homes was a "Developer of the Year" awardee by the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders Associations (Creba). Today, it continues to acquire and develop substantial tracts of land through joint ventures with landowners and corporations.

THE M.V. Lomonosov State University in Moscow, Russia

World's largest university bldg

AMAZING STRUCTURES

THE M.V. Lomonosov State University in Moscow, Russia, has the world's largest university building, as listed in the Guinness World Records. The gargantuan structure has a height of 240 meters with 32 stories and 40,000 rooms.

Located on the Sparrow Hills, south of Moscow, Russia, the Moscow State University was established in 1755 while the university building was constructed between 1949 and 1953.

The university campus covers an area of 205.7 hectares.

Population

The university has a population of over 76,000 with more than 40,000 undergraduates, about 7,000 postgraduate students, over 5,000 specialists, more than 4,000 professors and lecturers, about 5,000 researchers and over 15,000 auxiliary staff. In addition, around 2,000 international students and postgraduates from all over the world enroll in the state university.

The largest and one of the oldest Russian institutions of higher education, the Moscow State University is named after academician Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765) who greatly inspired the establishment of the state university.

Dianne M. Villafuerte

Free Worldbex seminars

THE PHILIPPINE World Building and Construction Exhibition (Worldbex) will again hold the Worldbex seminars but this time for free as part of 10th anniversary celebration of Worldbex.

Worldbex Services International (WSI), the organizers of the event, said the seminars would now be free for industry-related PRC ID holders. They will be held on March 17-18 at the Philippine Trade Training Center (PTTC), Pasay City.

Joseph Ang, WSI founding chair, expects trade professionals nationwide particularly architects, interior designers and engineers to come in droves and take advantage of the free seminars.

FENG SHUI

Condo units with a view

By Dianne M. Villafuerte

ONE of the come-ons of apartments, or what is more commonly known to us as condominiums, is the view. Being greeted by a nice view upon waking up each morning and before retiring at night gives us a feeling of well-being and inspiration, creates a sense of peace among neighbors and generates beneficial chi (energy) within the apartment itself.

Feng shui masters and consultants also believe that an expansive view provides the apartment some "space to breathe."

In feng shui theory, a poor view not only prevents sufficient sunlight but also restrains auspicious chi which in turn encourages anxiousness and depression.

Zaihong Shen, feng shui practitioner and writer, gives us several tips on how to tell if that apartment or condominium we are planning to move into has a "bad view.

Too much of good thing

Our elders often tell us that even too much of a good thing is bad—and this is often proven true, even in feng shui. A window that is too expansive and large, can be likened to a front door that is radically large for your home.

This window may be giving you a good, uninterrupted view of the horizon, but it is also letting your apartment's beneficial energy escape from your home. The solution: place a small mirror on the inside of the window to reflect the energy back into your apartment.

Not always good luck

Where it is believed to be good luck to have your home looking out onto a church, temple or anther religious building in many western cultures, it is the other way around in China. Having a church or a temple in view from your apartment engulfs your home with spiritual chi, which in turn constrains other auspicious energy needed for health, luck, romance, children and wealth.

For feng shui practitioners, hanging sheer curtains on the windows overlooking a religious building will prevent the spiritual energy from drowning your apartment while still allowing sunlight into the room.

Several of our condominiums nowadays are in clusters or in close distance to each other. Add to that the office or commercial buildings built nearby.

Counter negative influence

It is most likely that a building or two is blocking natural light and fresh air from our own apartment which in effect hinders the circulation of healthy chi. To counter the negative influence of an opposing and blocking building, sheer curtains should be installed to still allow light to enter the apartment.

Shen also encourages condominium dwellers to have walls and furniture in light, warm colors to create an illusion of a sunlit room and to promote the entry of beneficial chi.

E-mail your comments at fengshui.inquirer@gmail.com.

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New concrete home construction method

By Charles E. Buban

WITH RISING construction costs, a relatively new concrete home construction method promises to play a major role in the future growth of one developer engaged in affordable housing projects.

The system, called cast-in-place concrete construction, involves setting up removable forms for the pouring of concrete walls.

"This method offers many advantages, posing an alternative to the often used methods like concrete masonry and precast," explains Phinma Property Holdings Corp. president and CEO Willie Uy.

As the method used by PPHC, it was able to deliver low-cost condominium housing projects around the country without resorting to cheap construction materials and questionable quality of finished units.

Durable, long lasting

"The system allows us to construct and deliver homes at a much faster rate (compared to traditional construction methods) while at the same time come up with solid concrete structures that are durable and long lasting," reveals Uy.

He explains that all walls formed by the system are load bearing and are interspersed with structural grade steel reinforcements.

"Because of economies of scale brought about by the cast-in-place concrete construction, PPHC is able to deliver bigger-size units at the same affordable price within its market segment," says Uy.

Uy reveals that even in the affordable homes segment, buyers have become discriminating in their choice of units.

"No matter what price range, buyers are now looking more closely for the best package that their money can buy. With the system we are employing, we are able to deliver very attractive home packages that is still within their capacity to buy," reveals Uy.

One example is the Mediterranean-style, five-story walk-up condominium buildings that PPHC jointly developed with the Quezon City government.

Practical choice

Located just beside the La Mesa Eco Park in Quezon City, Sunny Villas has become a premiere and practical choice for small families and even students.

Sunny Villas is composed of 812 units with floor areas ranging from 30 to 60 square meters and 90 sq m.

Homebuyers also have the option to acquire two or three adjacent units either horizontally or two units vertically for bigger living space option.

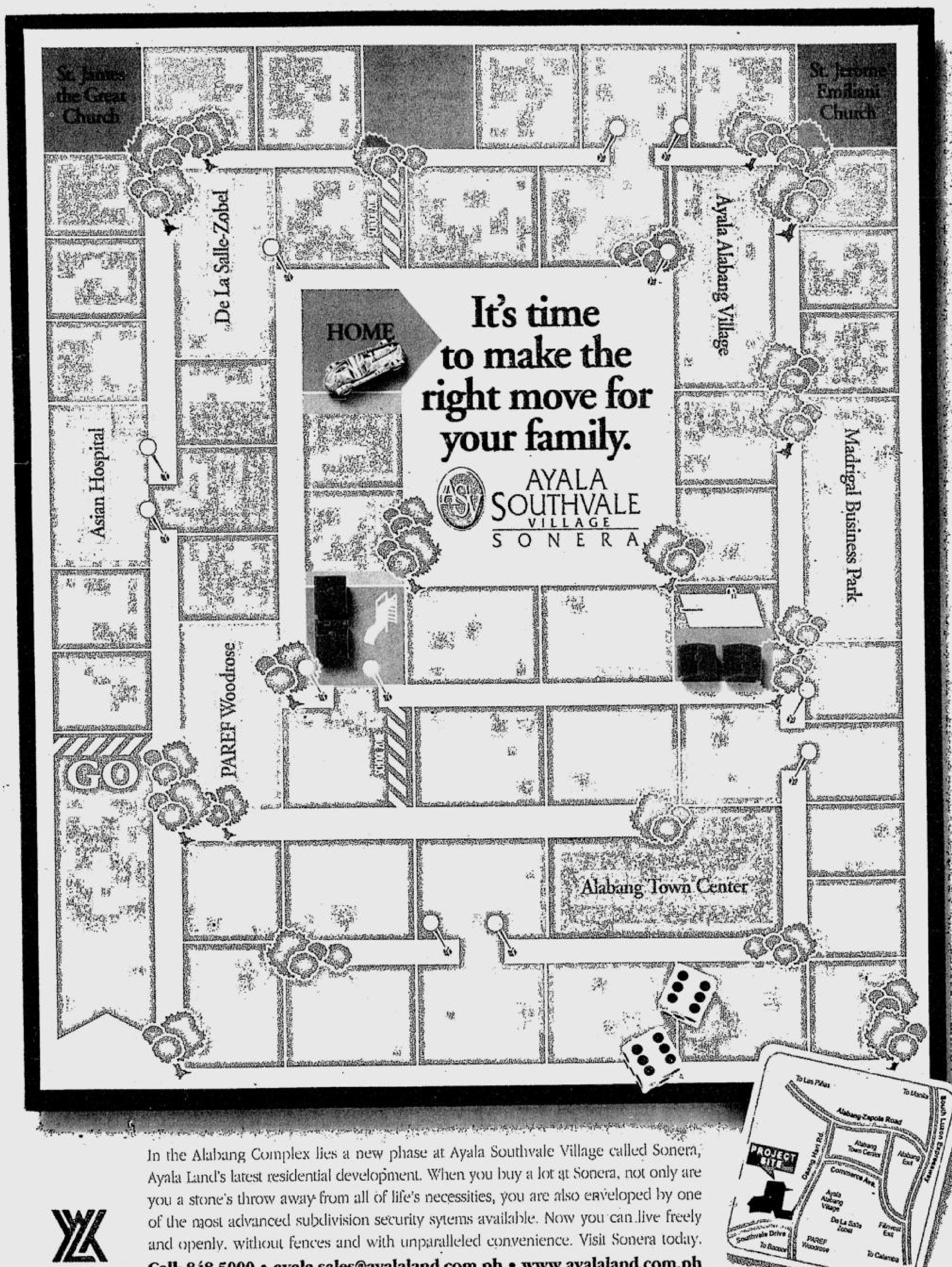
"We are never afraid to offer these properties at very attractive packages: with some units having a monthly amortization running below P5,500 (through Pag-Ibig), the package offers an unbelievable opportunity for a lot of clients who want to own condo units," says PPHC marketing manager Grant Orbeta.

Orbeta adds that the 30-sq-m unit package is probably the lowest selling price per square meter for this type of housing within Metro Manila.

In fact, in less than nine months from Sunny Villas groundbreaking, PPHC has successfully sold nearly all its units.

BY USING a unique building system, Sunny Villas offers its residents the opportunity to live in a condo-type community at an affordable price range.

"I think one can never go wrong by combining affordability and excellent built quality. What we have done here at Sunny Villas is to use high-grade materials in keeping with the Phinma tradition of quality and then sell it a price that every average Filipino buyer will find very reasonable," says Uy.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SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2005

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Creative Director **Tim Yap**

Super!Countdown

9 days

style . urban living . pop culture . entertainment . recreation

beach slap

Dive into the Maldives page D1

Fall in love with Balesin page G1

Read Pepe and James diary page G2

Go for a roller coaster ride in post-tsunami Thailand page F1

Produced by TIM YAP
Photography
EDDIE BOY ESCUDERO
Cover Star
HINDY WEBER-TANTOCO
d CULTE FEMME Summer
Sojourn 2005 Models

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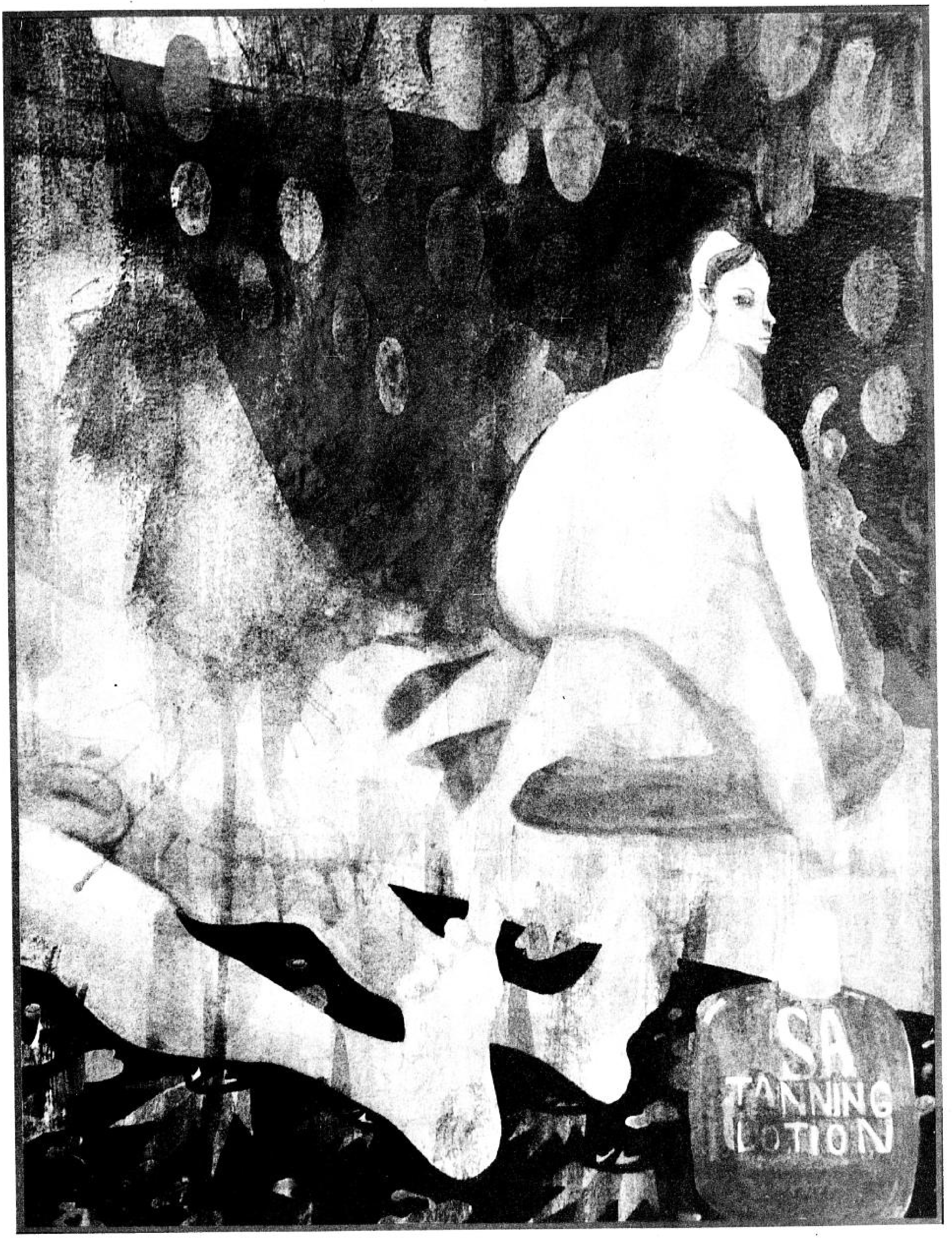

The Tan Commandments

Summertime in our islands can be a shore thing if you keep these seven things in mind

Text by Tals Diaz and Gino de la Paz
Original artwork by Jason Moss

FOR AN ISLAND people, we don't seem to respect the beach as much as we should. Many people don't give a toss about tossing their cigarette butts, junk food wrappers and half-eaten *mais* along our coastlines, illegal fishing is still a baneful problem all over our archipelago, and even walking along Manila Bay today, in spite of its rehabilitated state, is still not as romantic as it once was—unless you get butterflies in your stomach at the stench of floating feces.

Even an idyllic islander mentality is at times a bit skewed, considering that many girls disdain their natural tawny tone and spend an absurd amount on skin-whitening products. A great irony, indeed, considering that many Westerners hailing from cold climates spread eagle themselves under ozone-depleted skies in the hopes of achieving our *kayumanggi* color.

Perhaps we are collectively guilty of not appreciating our birthright. Our tropical beaches, for one, remain the primary draw for tourists from all over the world. (Our friendly English-speaking transsexuals are a close second, but we digress.) And because of last December's South Asian tsunami tragedy, more tourists are re-routing themselves to our isles, which have been fortunately spared from living history's greatest catastrophe. True, our islands weren't wiped out by killer waves, but if we remain apathetic, then we may be our own destructive force.

We at Super! are a self-confessed beachy bunch. As staunch advocates of eco-(and pop culture) awareness, we believe that life in these islands CAN be a shore thing if you keep these Tan Commandments in mind:

1. Thou shalt be a bathing beauty. For dudes, instead of looking like a point guard, look like a lifeguard instead. Ditch 'em basketball shorts in favor of boardies, which look good on most body types. A friendly warning: Speedos are for Europeans, gay guys or European gay guys. For chicks, forget the faux conservative, Maria Clara mindset on the beach and dare to wear a string bikini! While you're at it, leave that baggy T-shirt you use to cover up (and even go swimming with) at home together with your high heels and smug city attitude!

2. Thou shalt bake under the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. If skin cancer is your idea of fun, that is. There is such a thing as SPF, you know, so use it! And reapply as needed.

3. Thou shalt bring good music to the beach. Trust us, it adds to the ambience. Just imagine downing cocktails at sunset with the one you love with "Ocean Deep" blaring in the background. *Panget* noh?

4. Thou shalt have a friendly chat with a scuba diver/surfer dude when given the chance. They're the best people to talk to about preserving our seas, minus the cheese. They'll also tell you about some of their nightmares (day-mares?) in open water. It is a legend among local surfing circles how one waverider was once hit on the face with, of all things...a used sanitary napkin. Ew.

5. Thou shalt not dirty our beaches. Remember, only the ugly litter. Along with this, adopt the subtle practice of reminding red-handed litterbugs that it ain't cool to dump your sh*t on our shores.

6. Thou shalt channel Leo diCaprio in "The Beach." "Spreading news is part of a traveler's nature," his character said. Tell your friends, backpackers, tourists about the awesome places you've been to in the Philippines.

7. Thou shalt also treat summer as a state of mind. To quote Troy Bernardo, owner of Silver Lens Gallery, "summer isn't just about going to a destination but creating one wherever one is." Given that, even on the gloomiest of days, one can feel the summer and put as much sun in your life!

So go forth, beach hos! And heed our decrees as the sun cranks up the degrees.

The concert season is in full swing

CHECK out Repertory Philippines' Little Shop of Horrors

24/7

Janine Cuenca-Dario

IN THIS wicked women's month of March, Manila plays host to a good number of female international artists such as Norah Jones in her Asian Tour 2005 on March 12 at the Araneta Coliseum (phone 911-5555 or 637-7015), Avril Lavigne in her Bonez Tour on March 31 at The Fort Bonifacio Open Field (phone 911-5555) and the group Bliss, fronted by female singer Alexandra Hamnede on March 30 at Prince of Jaipur, The Fort (phone 0917-5203035).

Other exciting events are also on tap this month. The Fort heats up with Prince of Jaipur's weekly retro Wednesdays and chill out Fridays and neighbor Embassy Superclub's R&B on Wednesdays, Retro on Fridays and House music on Saturdays.

Eddie Boy Escudero chronicles the party years through 125 photographs in "When We Danced" at the Silver Lens Gallery (phone 816-0044), Pacific Plaza until April 12. Boyet Almazan's long-running DecaDance has just transferred its weekly Friday retro parties to Jill's (phone 818-4557).

Theatergoers will enjoy the line up this weekend as Repertory Philippines presents the musical "Little Shop of Horrors" (phone 887-0710). Koine Theater is staging "Deus ex Machina" and "Death by Obituaries" every Friday and Saturday of the month at the One Acts Theater (phone 410-4485).

This week, you can also check out band and live artist performances as well as DJ gigs.

THIS week's music pick: Norah Jones live in Manila

March 12, Saturday

Catch Grammy winner Norah Jones in her first Asian Tour at Araneta Coliseum. On the local front, you can listen to talented Barbie's Cradle at 19 East, Sucat which overlooks the Laguna de Bay. For some DJ music, chill out at Paseo Uno Lounge. dance at Embassy's weekly Dance Deluxe or transport yourself to the disco era of the '70s and '80s with Boyet Almazan in Swinging Saturdays at Teak. Been there, done that? Then proceed to '70s Bistro for Pinikpikan's percussive performance or at the Instituto Cervantes ("Inheritance") or Alliance Française de Manila ("Boudu sauvé des eaux") for their free movies screenings.

March 13, Sunday

Recover from the weekend parties by immersing in art at the Argie Bandoy exhibit at Mag:net Gallery or "Telltales" exhibit featuring Lina Llaguno Ciani's landscapes and still life at Galleria Duemila. Don't wait for the last weekend to enjoy Repertory Philippines Little Shop of Horrors at Onstage. You may just miss a good musical where Filipino talent is at its best.

March 14, Monday

I recommend that you catch the screening of "Bunso" by award-winning documentary filmmaker Ditsi Carolino at Shangri-La Plaza. This coincides with the formal launch of the East Asian Digital Film Competition. You can also drive to ritzy Greenbelt for the rock and Motown night with Mondaze at Absinth, Acoustic Night at Temple, Latin band Arriba at Café Havana and jazz man Romy Posadas & Bernie Uy at Merk's. Or check out '70s Bistro for "Music to Spoken Word" by Bitaw, Rocksteady and Nityalila.

THE HEAT is on at The Fort

March 15, Tuesday

Let's make this the day you take out your parents and grandparents to enjoy some rock and roll at Mandarin Oriental's Captain's Bar with the lively Spirit of '67 or at Dish with Svetlana and Motownground. Thirty and forty-somethings will surely enjoy their favorite band Side A at the picturesque 19 East, Sucat or Route 70 at the centrally-located Merk's.

March 16, Wednesday

Stunning 24/7 February cover girl and current toast of the Filipino music scene Mishka Adams, will be performing old standards and blues at Ayala Museum, while the best R&B tunes will be heard at Embassy with their weekly Superklasse and at Il Ponticello with Steve Mills and Aryan. Aruba at the Metrowalk will host Boyet Almazan for the first time ever. It's the weekly favorite Visa V Girl of the Week at V Bar with Manolet Dario pumping the place up with terrific house music.

March 17, Thursday

Thursday is normally a slow night but aficionados of alternative music will descend in droves to watch talented band Mojofly at Unplugged, while legendary folk band Asin will perform at '70s Bistro.

March 18, Friday

Within walking distance are Kuh Ledesma Unplugged at Captain's Bar and Johnny Alegre and Affinity at Monks@Wasabi while up north, graduates will be treated at a party in their honor at Metrowalk. For good ole house music, catch HouSessions with Manolet Dario at Teak or Cao Ocampo at Absinth. '70s Bistro, which has the best line up of musical artists plays host to the legendary band the Jerks. Boyet Almazan sends The Fort's temperature rising with the weekly DecaDance retro party at its new home in Jill's.

Schedules may change without prior notice. For more information and a complete listing of events, text 24/7 through your mobile phone and send to 2949 for Globe and 209 for Smart.

To win prizes such as Ipod Shuffle and a Peugeot, log on to www.mag24-7.com or pick up your free copy of 24/7 Nocturnal Navigator at bars and restaurants around the city. Submit your schedules every Wednesday to e-mail address events@mag24-7.com and mag24_7@yahoo.com or fax number 892-0689.

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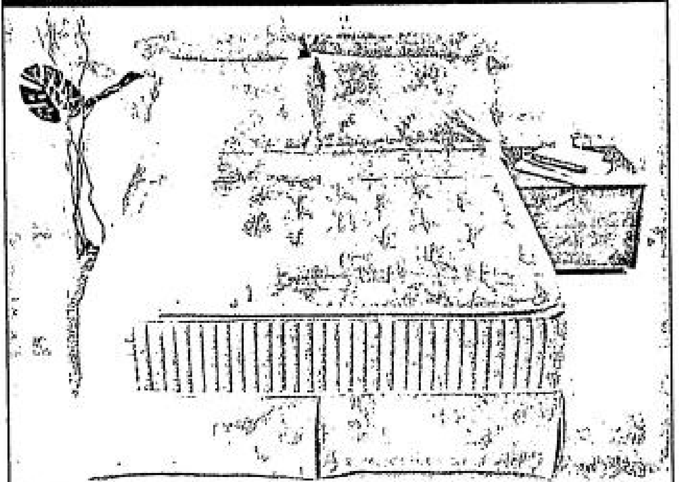

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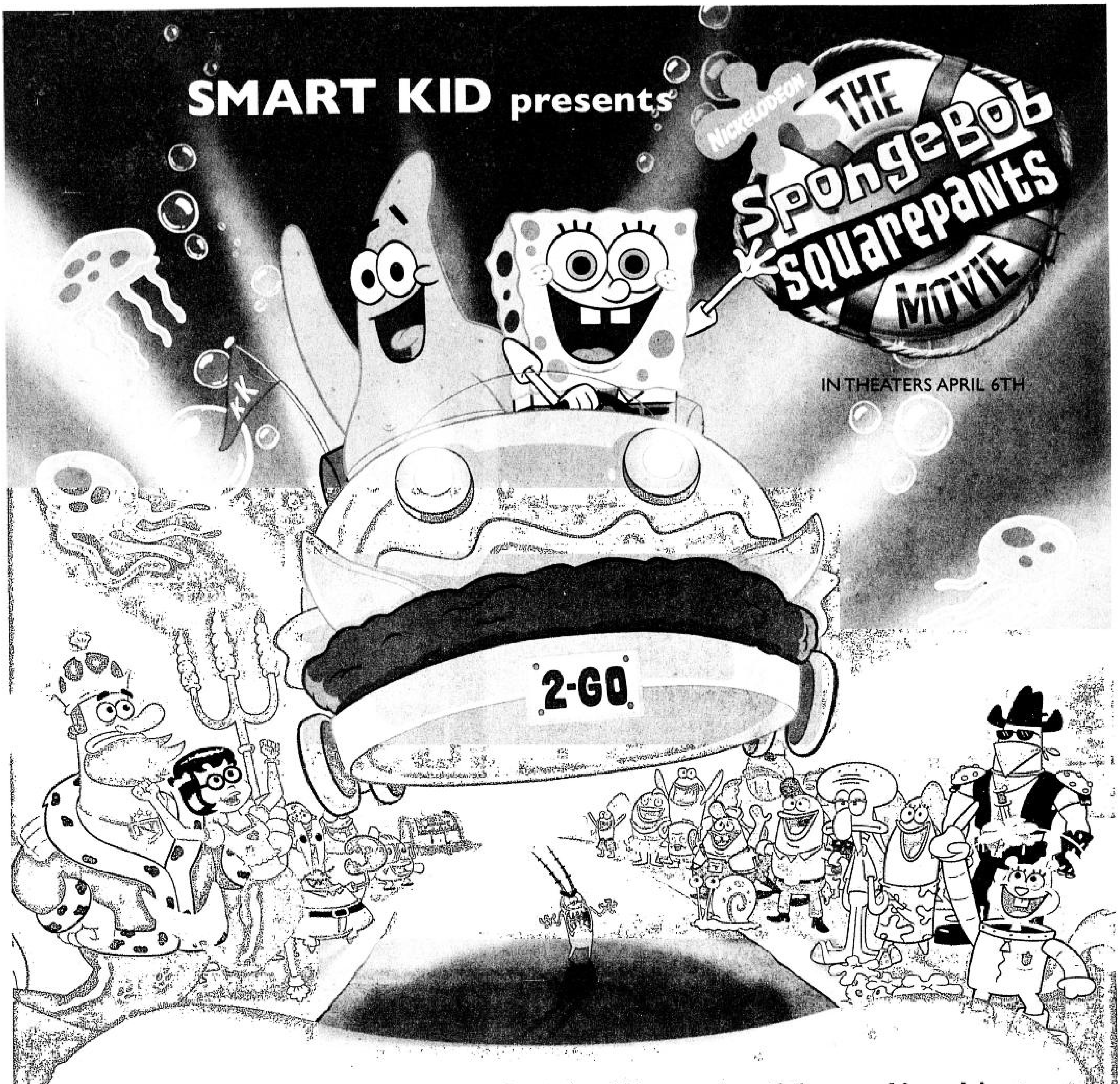

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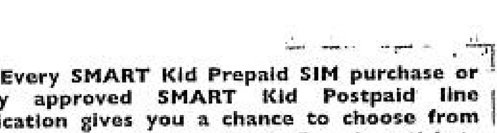

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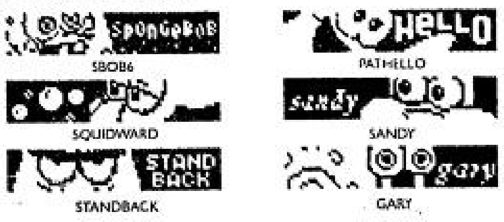

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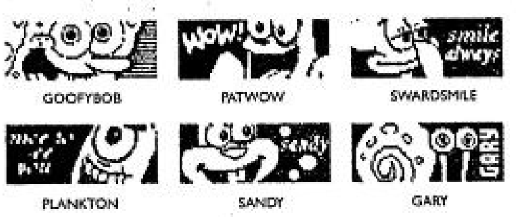

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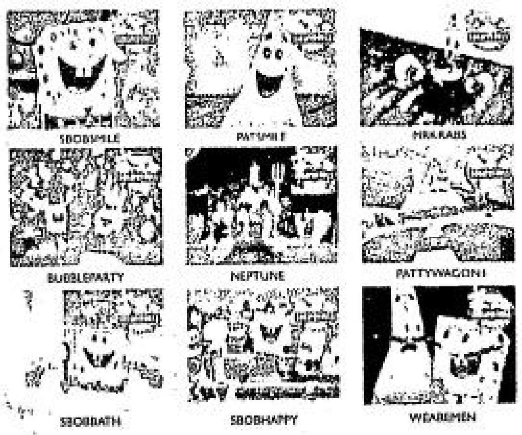

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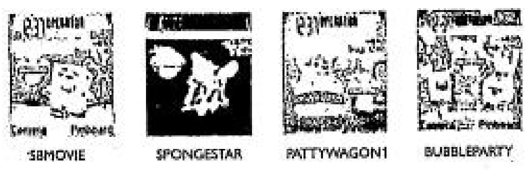

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The Jellyfish Song	JELLYFISH	Ocean Rock	OCEANRCK

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MUSIC		MOVIE LINES	
SpongeBob SquarePants Theme	102323	"Hurray for SpongeBob"	102334
The Best Day Ever	102324	"I Will Rule the World"	102335
SpongeBob and Patrick	102321	"Ohh It's Evil"	102339

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Let's Hear It For SpongeBob	HOORAY
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SUNRISE, SUNSET. Paradise found in the Maldives

VISIT THE MALDIVES VIA SINGAPORE AIRLINES

Sunny side up

Tim Yap

Photos by Tim Yap

IT'S SO cliche to say heaven on earth, but if you've gone to the Maldives, then you'll say the same thing.

Picture this: your Maldivian villa nests on the middle of the Indian Ocean, right smack center of the equator with the sun and sand meeting in parallel lives all devoted to you. Outside your suite is your balcony, and when you go down two steps, the warm, azure waters of the ocean embrace you. Like a screen heartthrob, fish suddenly swarm around you. Oh look, it's Nemo!

You inhale deeply, take a dip and see so much life around you, from multi-colored reefs to dazzling fish in parade mode—and this is the shallow end. You look up, and your view is the horizon. You belong to a world of a myriad new beginnings, brimming with hope, you exhale and look at the world like you own it.

I am **Donald Trump**. I am **Howard Hughes**. I am me—at ease with myself, at home with the world, with a greater respect for life and a newfound energy to make a difference in this universe.

Singapore Airlines journey

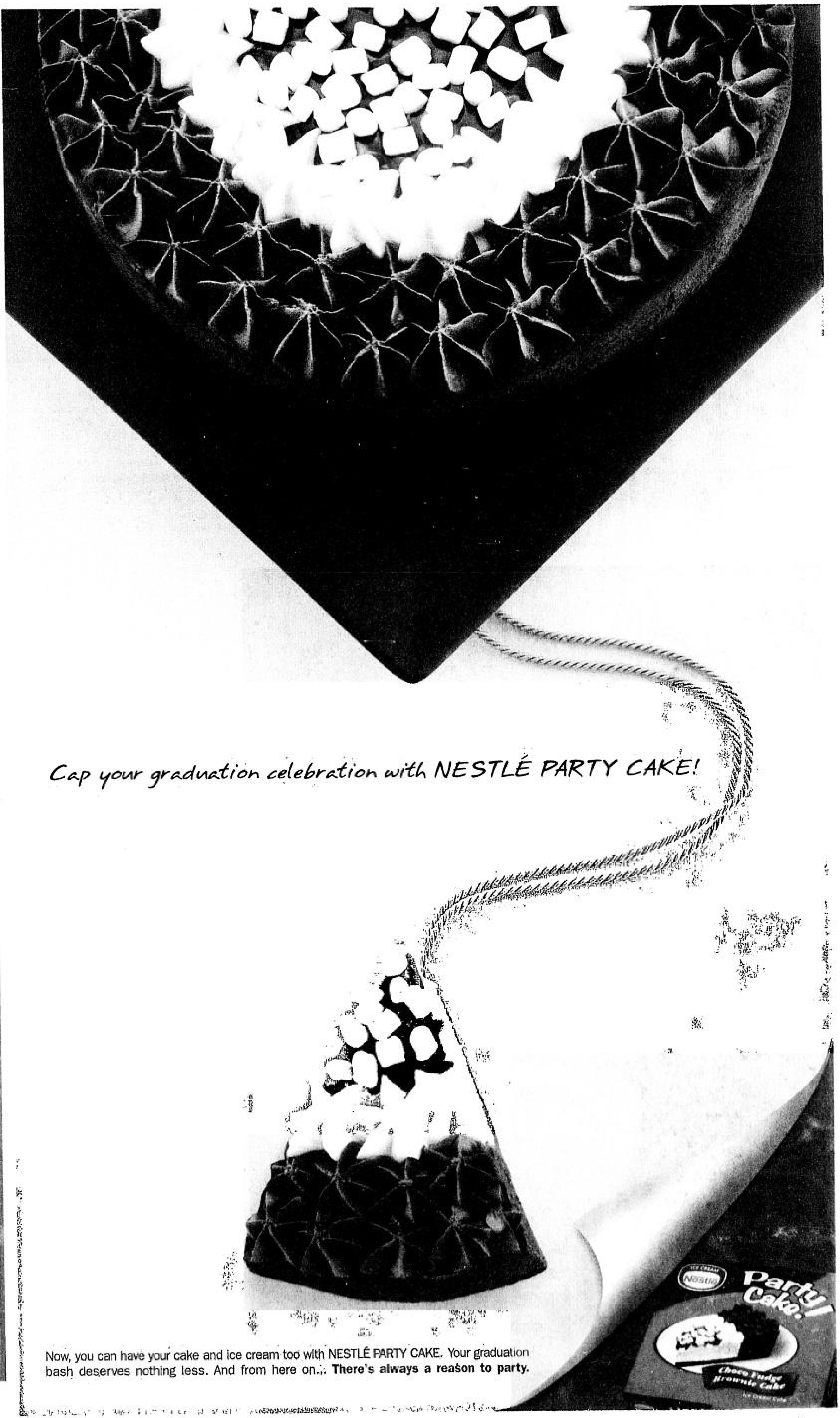
My Maldivian adventure started with a leisurely flight via Singapore Airlines, which flies three times a week to Male, the capital city of Maldives, via Singapore. (They have special promos by the way—*see sidebar.*) After a movie marathon of Closer and Finding Neverland, I reached the island kingdom or Dhivehi Raajje—that's how the Maldivians refer to their own country.

My first night's stay was at Kurumba Resort, where to absorb local color, I turned the TV on to a chanting priest whose rhythmic caterwauling put me to sleep. The rest served me well, as I was to meet with the Maldivian Tourism Minister **Dr. Mustafa Lutfi**. Earlier that day, we were toured around the resort areas—where **Clinton** stayed, where **Bush** stayed, where I stayed, etc. A popular thing with rooms in the resorts is an al fresco bathing area—so sexy if you ask me. The giant suites even have their private pools inside—if you want to be that secluded.

But anywhere on these isles, you can have your privacy, and eat it too. Just like our islands, the Maldives boasts of several isles,

SUNNY/D2

VILLAS IN THE CENTER OF THE INDIAN OCEAN. Where you can scream, "I'm the king of the world!"



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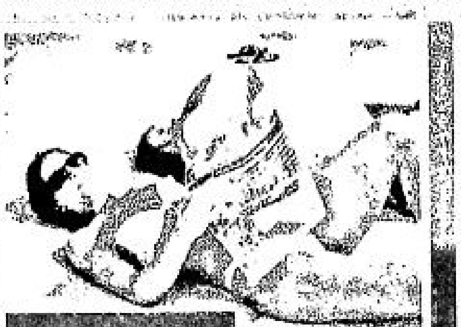
WEST EAST HONEYMOON. A British chick and a Cambodian hunk find love on the island



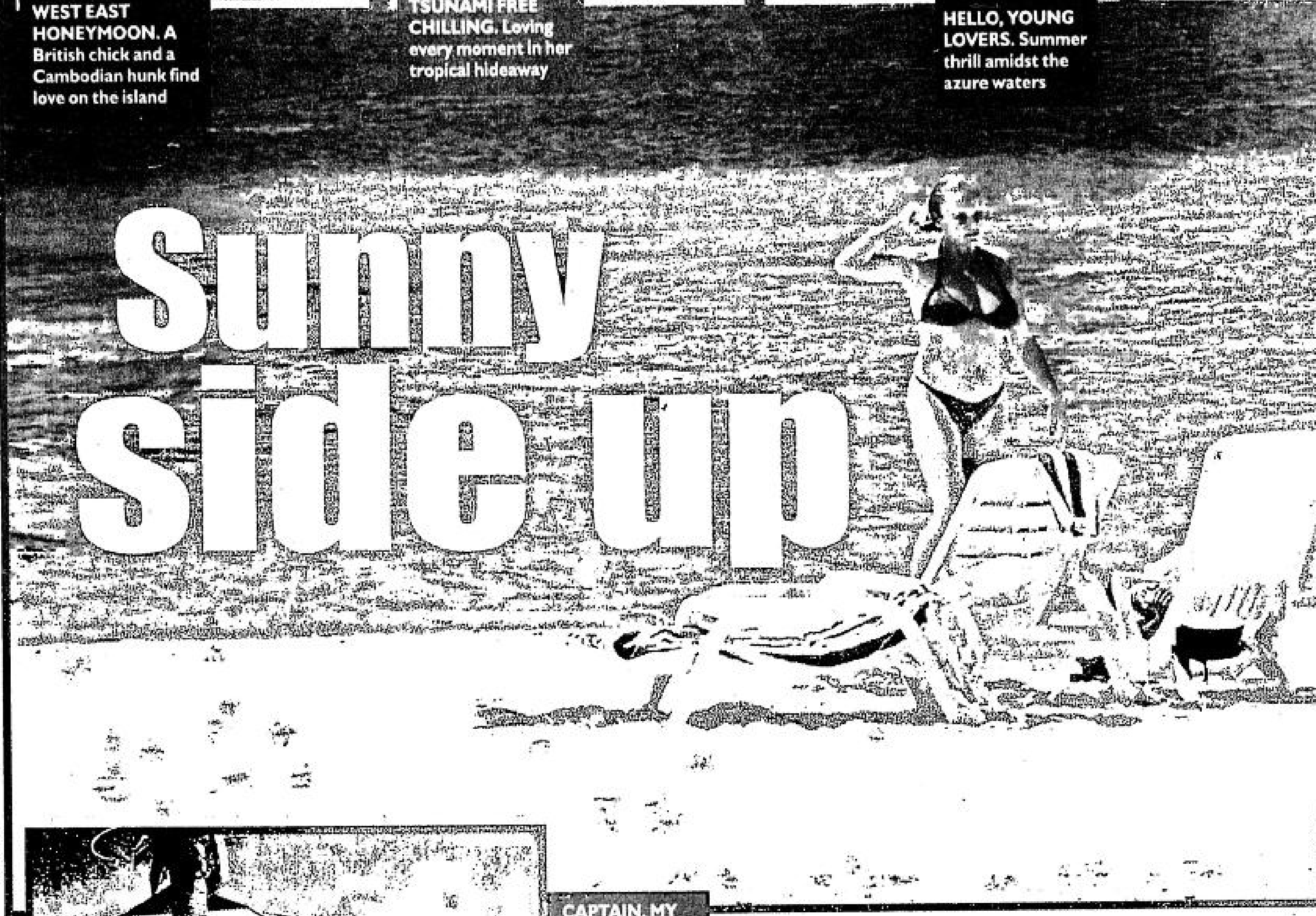
TSUNAMI FREE CHILLING. Loving every moment in her tropical hideaway

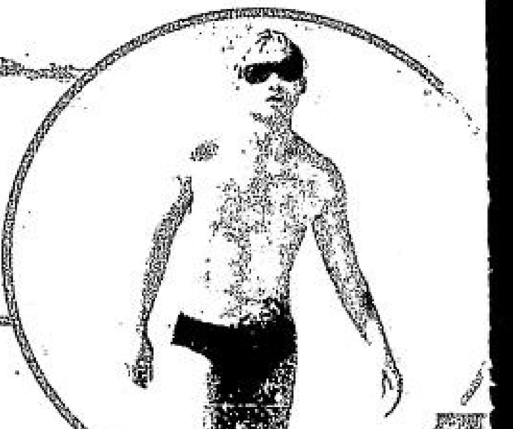
HELLO, YOUNG LOVERS. Summer thrill amidst the azure waters

SUN BED. Tanning and [illegible] looked this good

MOTHER and child bonding in the sun

Sunny side up





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CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN. Island hopping is a big part of the Maldivian fun

From page D1

atolls numbering to 1,200 that you can hop around in and enjoy—I did that and every time we docked to a new island, my heart skipped a beat. The Four Seasons even has an 11-room luxury cruise ship called the Four Seasons Explorer, which hops around the atolls where you can wade, swim and dive anytime you want.

"I thought the Maldives was wiped out during the tsunami!" Most people who believe in urban legends would like to believe. But again, just like when a tinge of insurgency happens down south, the rest of the country remains safe. "In fact, when the tsunami struck, the waters were knee deep in the morning (we're used to that)—but right after, the resorts cleaned the place up and served lunch buffet for their guests right after. The north and south parts are completely safe and inhabitable," said **Andrew Wong**, Singapore Airlines general manager for the Maldives.

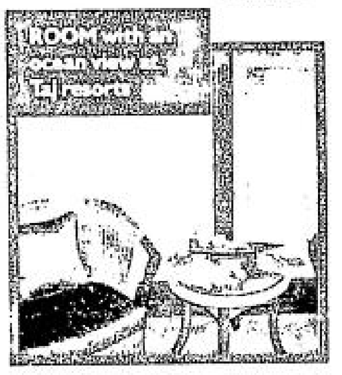
Tsunami free

I also went to Huraa island, a shopping town most devastated by the tsunami. When I got there, the vendors were all agog, calling out to me like I was their last chance for a sale—and I was. I felt like a tourist in the red light district of Amsterdam. I bought a lot of Maldivian fish print scarves (Prada's inspiration for Summer 2005) and native belts.

More than the shopping, the German divemaster of Taj resort (my favorite one in the whole of Maldives) invited me for a crash course on diving—and I gamely went for it. All of a sudden, my appreciation for all things under the sea went sky high. It was about me going outside my comfort zone and conquering fears of depth, and otherwise.

People think of the Maldives as just a playground of the rich and the famous—but it's more than that. It's a place for introspection, bonding with yourself and realizing what life has to offer.

The Maldives did just that for me. "A vision so unique you can't help but wonder if it's real—only nature in its unhurried motion could have created such splendor."



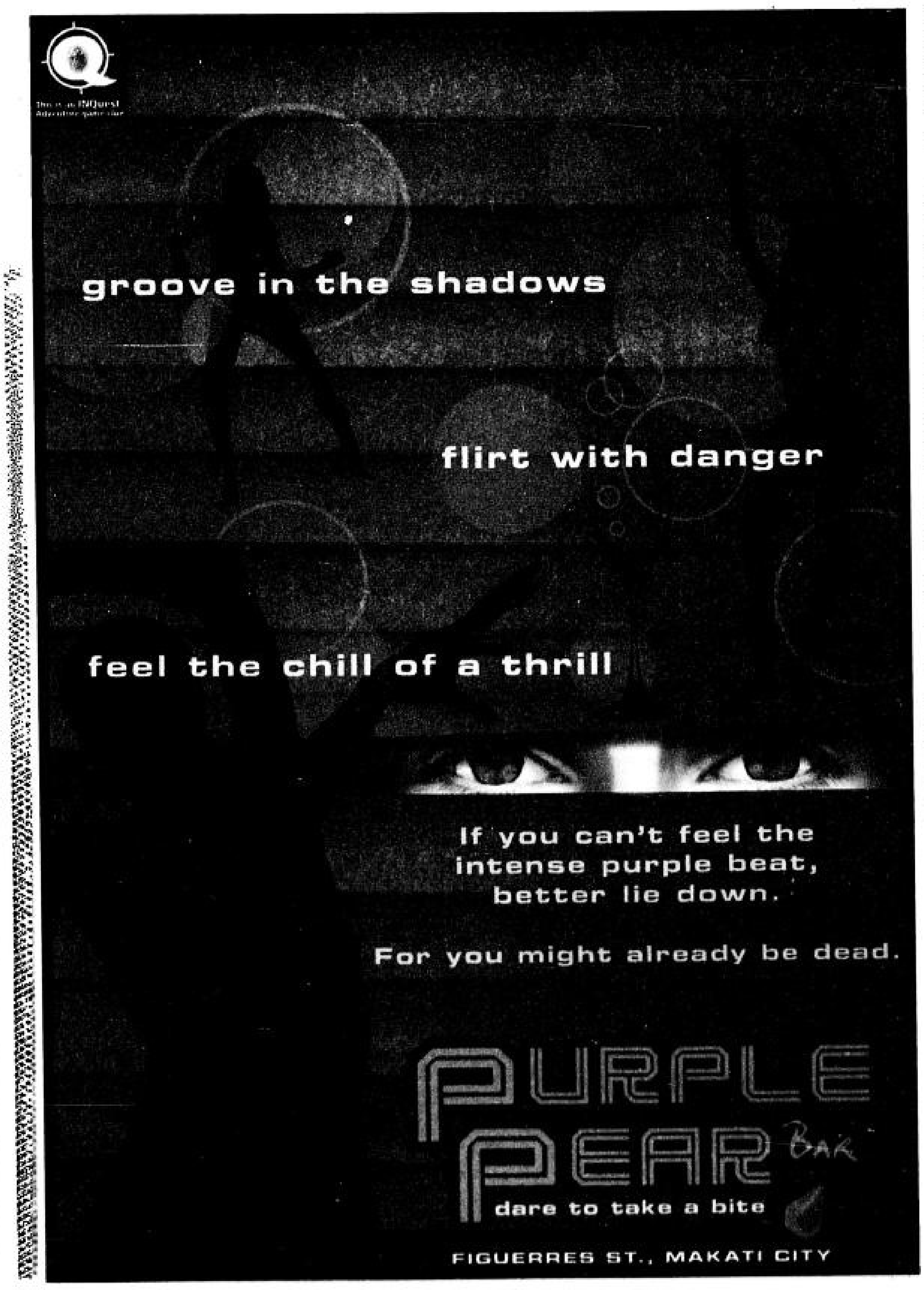
ROOM with an ocean view [illegible] Taj resorts

BARKADA FUN. The Maldives [illegible] escape for you and your best buddies, too

Celebrities who have been to the Maldives and live to tell t

"We stayed at the Banyan Tree Vabbinfaru for one week in our honeymoon. Being an exclusive island resort, the place is a paradise like no other: white sand beach and an infinity of turquoise water. We went on a 1-day excursion and had barbecue lunch in a private island. I felt like the young Brooke Shields in Blue Lagoon! On our last night, my husband surprised me with dinner on a private sandbar under the stars. Back in our villa, the staff prepared the jacuzzi with candles and red rose petals. It was the perfect way to end a romantic getaway!"

–Miriam Quiambao-Rondinelli



This is an INQuest Adventure [illegible]

groove in the shadows

flirt with danger

feel the chill of a thrill

If you can't feel the intense purple beat, better lie down.

For you might already be dead.

PURPLE PEAR BAR

dare to take a bite

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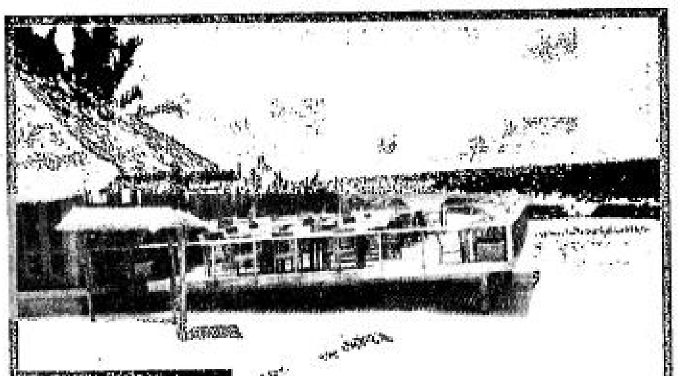
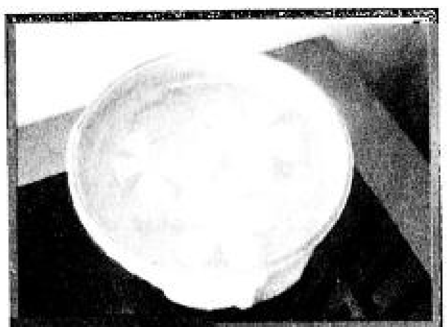
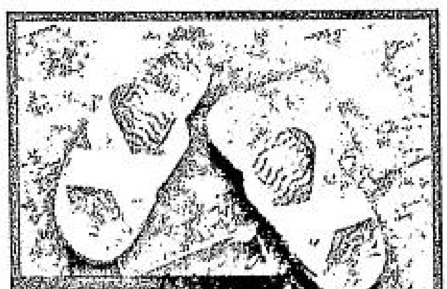


DINE WITH THE VIEW OF THE OCEAN. Anywhere you go, its just sheer beauty



THE BEAUTY is in the details

MY FOOTPRINT in the Maldivian sand—Tim Yap was here!



MY BEETLE BUG SANDALS. They're made for walking and that's just what they'll do...

MALDIVIAN TOURISM CHIEF. Dr. Mustafa Lutfi at Kurumba Resort

GINGER tea, or me? A primer to a Maldivian Spa treatment

SPA, anyone?

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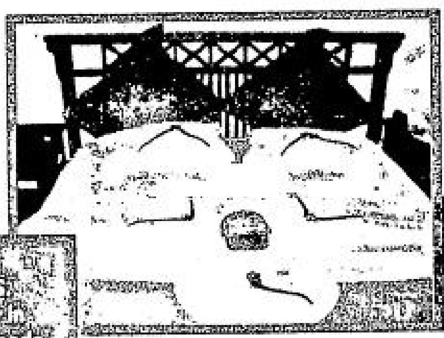

BEDTIME stories

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For more details, call your travel agent or Singapore Airline Tours desk in Manila at 7515151 to 52; in Cebu 2326211 and in Davao 2245608

e story . . .

"Totally enjoyed the Maldives experience! The sand and water in every atoll is amazing... I had to literally be dragged out of the beach before we left because I didn't want to go."

–Rosanne Prieto

"I went to the Maldives with my husband Yilmaz and Lorin to bond with each other and I must say, it was a magical moment for all of us"

–Ruffa Gutierrez-Bektas

"I made sure to get my diver's license right before going to the Maldives. The marine life is just too amazing. I went there with Singapore Airline's Rita Dy and Johnny Litton. We went onboard tyhe Four Season's Explorer and we had the best time ever. I can't wait till my next trip to marvelous Maldives."

–Ces Drilon

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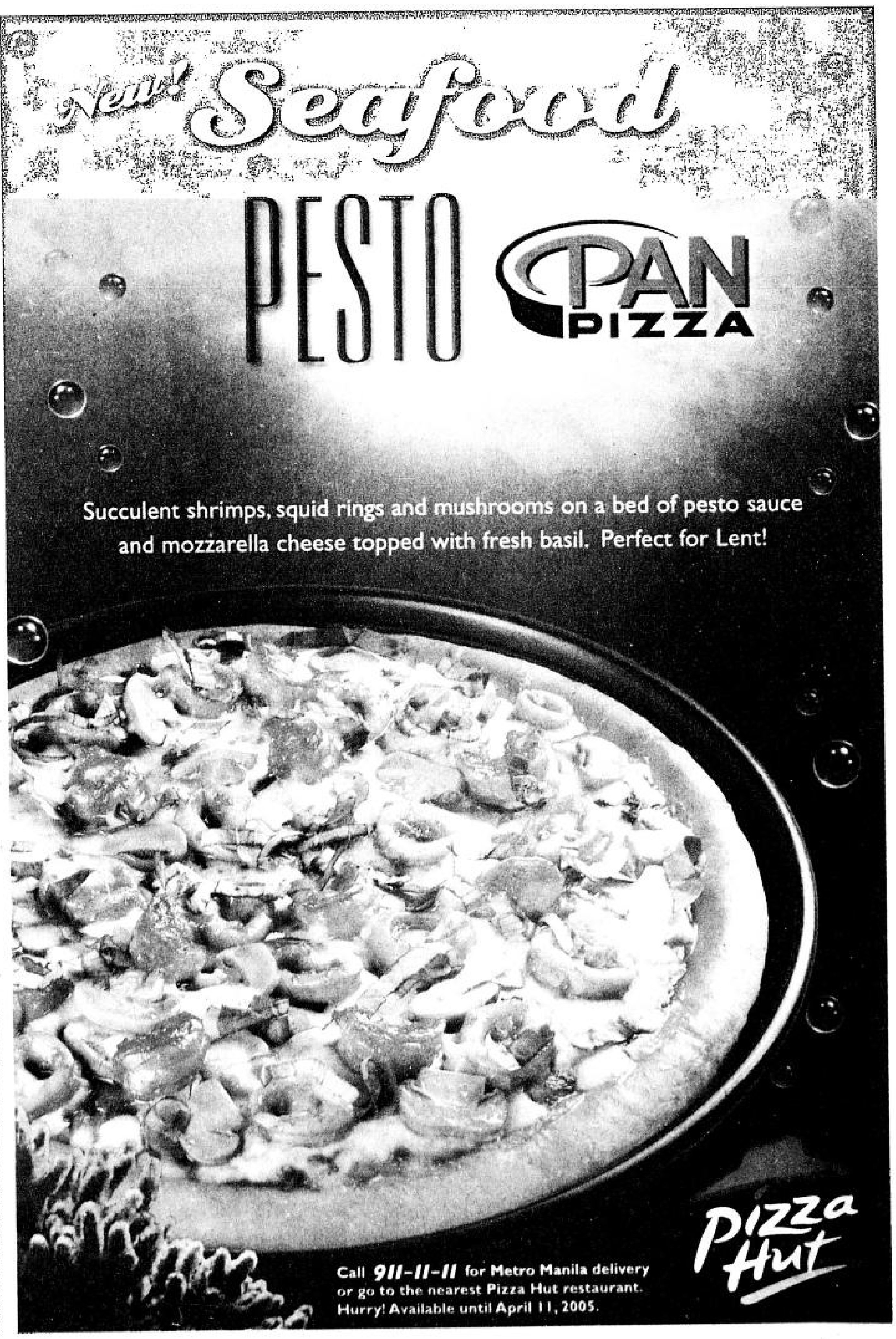

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Show me the Kimchi

The Koreans are in the house, peeps, and they're pumping dough into the Pinoy tourism industry. Hooray!

SOMEWHERE in Boracay, amid the smoke emanating from a longaniza burger stand and 97% humidity, I sank eyes-deep into a shoal of foreign travelers. At a time when the local economy is taking a beating, it was awesome to see tourists crashing our shores to live vicariously through our pristine beaches, swaying palms and friendly prostitutes. (Awkward pause.)

Age against the machine

Gino de la Paz

But seriously, what's more amazing is this: From that drunken dude raping a Ricky Martin song in a karaoke bar to that random lady with the huge hat and milky yellow thighs, a majority of these sightseers are from South Korea. I repeat, South Korea. Represent, y'all.

That really shouldn't come as a complete shocker since more than 340,500 Korean tourists visited the country from January to November 2004 alone. According to the Department of Tourism, Korea continues to be the third largest market in terms of tourist arrivals to our WOW Islas Filipinas, following the United States and Japan. In Boracay, however, it's a different story with the Koreans leading the pack as indicated by data from the Department of Tourism-Western Visayas and my astute powers of observation.

To give you a clearer picture of what all this means, jog your memory back to the final minutes of the film "Being John Malkovich." You know, that freaky scene where John sneaks into that little door and finally gets into his own head. Needless to say, he sees everyone as himself. (Sorry if I spoiled the movie for you. Boohoo.) If you thought that was scary, replace John Malkovich with Sandara Park. Presto! You have Boracay, or any local island resort, on a typical weekend.

If you think that little mental exercise was kinda twisted, pardon me. As if you didn't know, this article comes with free internalized feelings. Worry not, however, as I have enlisted local tourism experts to help us figure out how and why these East Asians are suddenly taking a detour, crowding beaches in the south, and, most important, pumping won into the Philippine economy. Yay!

From Seoul to Cebu

Neil Rumbaoa, director of communications at Shangri-La's Mactan Island Resort in Cebu, noticed the increase in tourist arrivals from South Korea as far back as 1998. "But it wasn't until five years ago that a conscious effort to grow and develop the market was hatched," he clarifies.

According to Neil, Korean travelers in Shang Mactan have been pouring in because of the direct flights from Seoul to Cebu. Today, there are eight regular chartered flights a week. "In fact in Korea, Cebu is considered the leading honeymoon destination in Southeast Asia." Awww…

Koreans make up about 37 to 39% of Shang Mactan's guests while the Japanese market comprises around 16%. To spell out how this development came to be, Neil chalked it up to economics. "[The Koreans] do outnumber the Japanese practically 2:1. At the same time that the Korean economy was booming [which boosted foreign travel among its citizens], the Japanese economy was on the decline. Concerns on safety and security [on the part of the Japanese] also figured for a while. The Korean market, on the other hand, was very resilient, even at the time of SARS and 9/11."

In Neil's opinion, Koreans like the Philippines despite the tourist abductions and general bedlam. For them, our country is a "tropical island paradise" with "warm balmy weather" and "sincere hospitality." Neil and Shangri-La Mactan believe that the Philippines will still be a top destination for the Korean market. "The country has all the right sights and experiences [that are] attractive to the Korean market. They will continue to come to the Philippines," he concludes.

In unrelated news, I was stalked by a tiny Korean woman when I stayed at Shang Mactan last month. *Wala lang*, just sharing.

SHOW/ E2

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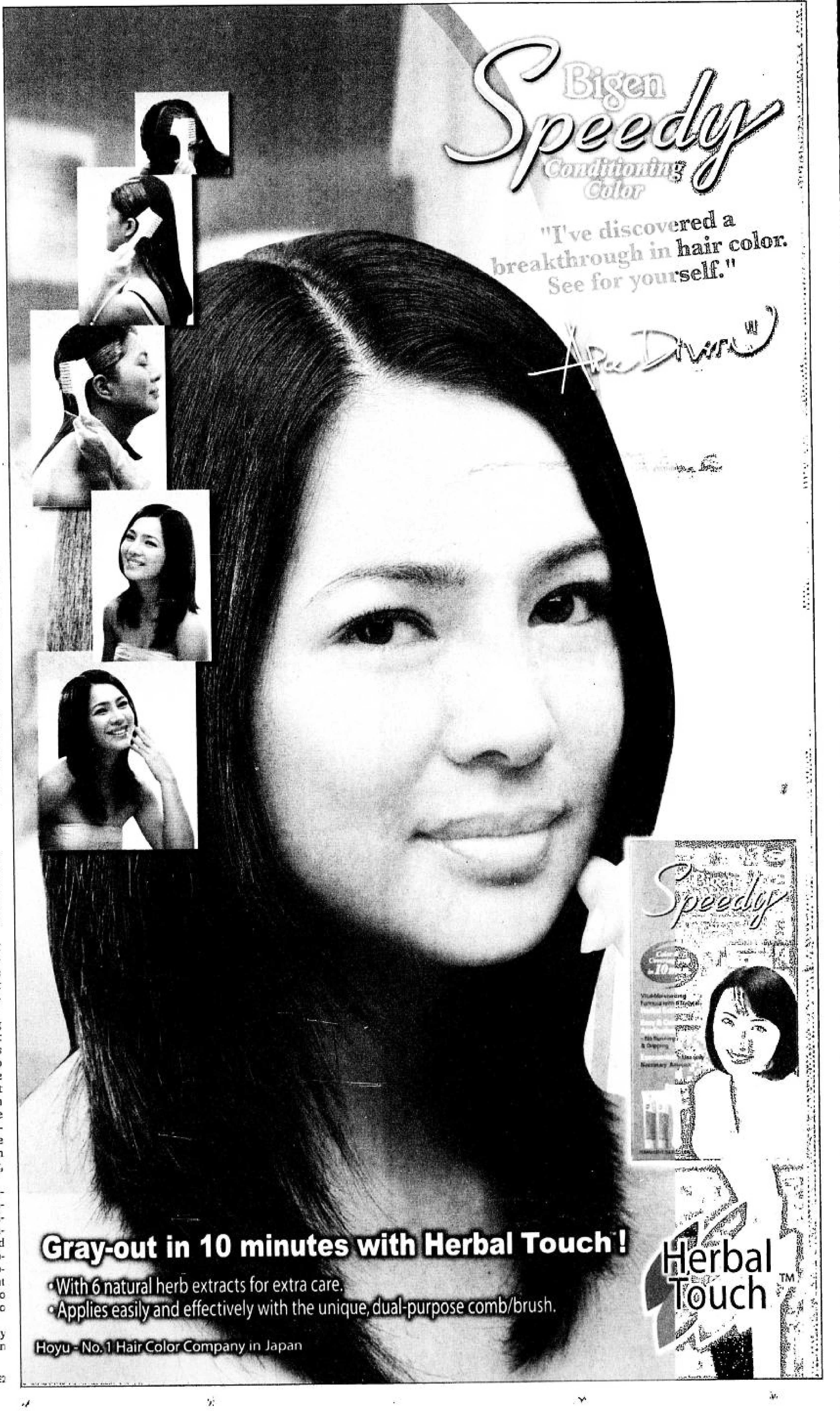
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Show me the Kimchi!

From page E1

Koreans invade Palawan

Following Cebu, Puerto Princesa was the second city outside Manila which Philippine Airlines (PAL) opened up to direct overseas flights. The maiden international flight was the result of efforts of PAL and Dos Palmas Arrecefi Island Resort Palawan to take advantage of the Korean tourist gold mine.

July and August are school break months in Korea, while September until November is open season for honeymooners. Leeds Trompeta, Dos Palmas' sales and marketing director, was happy that their experiment went horribly right. It seems that they have cornered the Korean market. "We no longer have to worry about the lean months when few tourists go on vacation because of the rainy weather," he says.

"Tourism and economy are mirror images, meaning as long as the [Korean] economy remains strong [Koreans] will have enough disposable income to continue traveling to the Philippines," Leeds discloses. "According to our travel partners in Seoul, the Philippines ranks around no. 4 or 5 in the hierarchy of destinations to visit in Asia, therefore it is imperative to continue focusing our marketing [efforts]."

As a recent visitor to that resort, I was in complete turn-and-stare mode at the sheer number of Korean families and horny couples on the island, most of whom were not enjoying the sun but were having a good time anyway playing ping pong. (Since I was also sorta not enjoying the sun, other guests thought I was Korean, too, which pissed me off. Which then made me laugh. Which then led to a slight craving for alcohol.) Man, what a weekend.

Meanwhile, back in Boracay

Regarding tourist figures, Nami Boracay's Lex Ledesma says they have clients from all over. "We get a good mix of Koreans, Japanese, American and European guests," he shares. At present, though, it appears that Korean tourists outnumber the Japanese. "I think the Philippines is the 'in' place for Koreans now. Plus, because there are a lot of tourists, more Korean-speaking guides and restaurants are sprouting up which makes it even more of a draw for them to come."

From Lex's experience, the Koreans that go to Nami are 90% honeymooners and come from the A economic class of Korean society. "They are actually great guests and are very easy to deal with. They like Nami in particular because it doesn't have the chaos of the long beach in Boracay, something ideal for any honeymooner, Korean or otherwise. I think Koreans think highly of Philippine resorts, otherwise they wouldn't continue to frequent them."

More than that, Lex is convinced that this Korean deluge is not just a trend. "Really, we are less expensive than the alternatives in Southeast Asia. Also, we are a hospitable people. Lastly, after the tsunami many are looking for other options. [I don't mean] to sound like we are taking advantage of the misfortune of our Asian neighbors, but the tsunami really has had a positive effect on Philippine tourism." So the score stands at Banda Aceh: 0, Boracay: 1. Or something like that. Kidding.

Koreans: In or out?

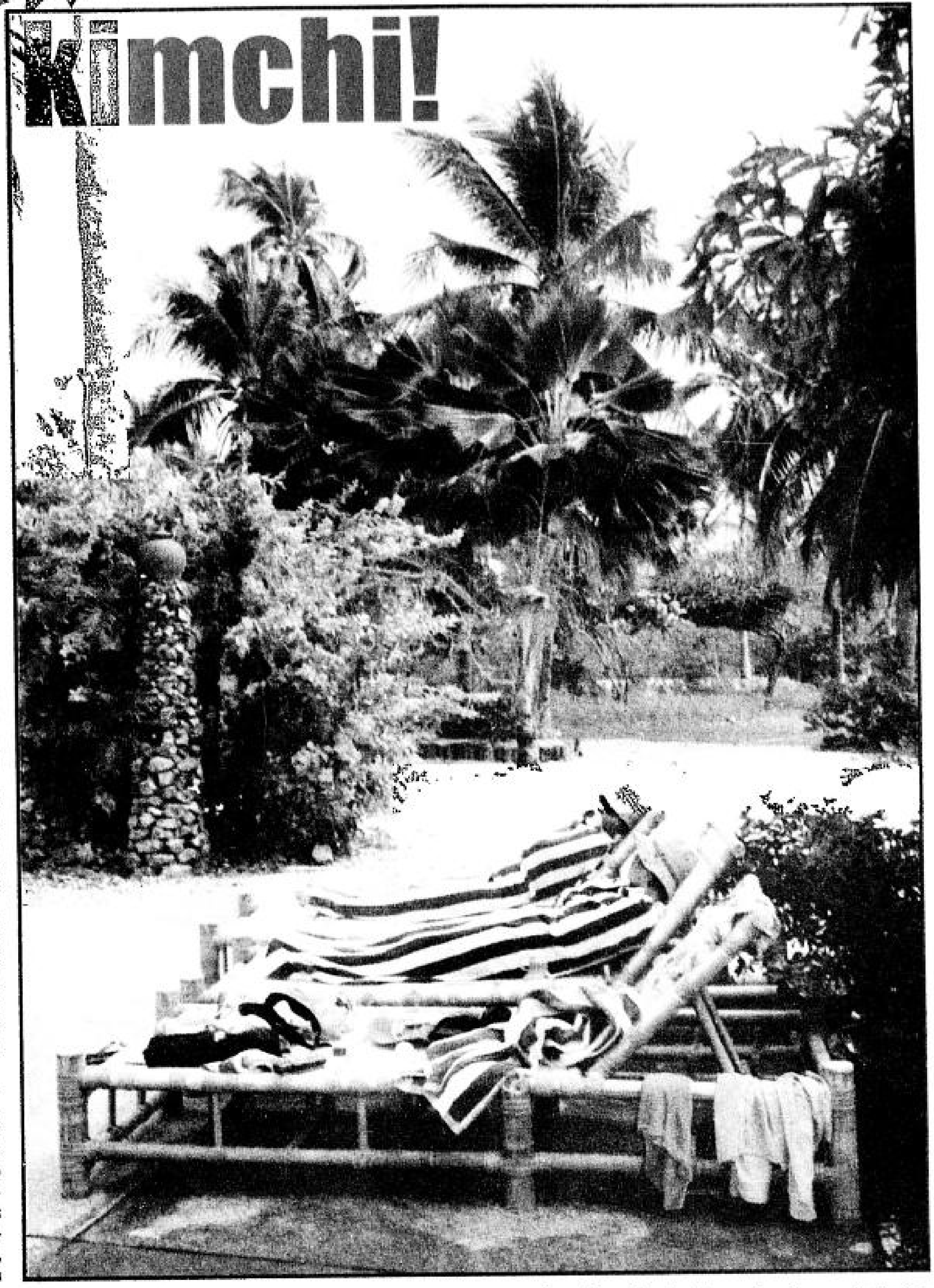
From setting up entire communities in Baguio to inspecting every colonial curlicue in Intramuros, Korean tourists really are on the verge of omnipresence in our archipelago. In fact, "Korea" has become the full-on watchword of the local hospitality industry.

I'd like to put it this way: Camera-toting Japanese tourists are so last century. You may see an odd exchange student here and there, but most of the Japanese nationals you see now are golfers.

Next, there may be tons more Europeans here, but most of them are backpackers. And backpackers scrimp. They won't plunk down cash for a $400 room and they'd choose to bunk in a $9 room instead. Which brings me to the Koreans.

Being travelers who don't seem to end in the agony of insufficient funds, it doesn't take a lot for them to open their wallets, satisfy their urge to criss-cross the globe and suddenly touch down in a spot near you. (While I'm at it, it also doesn't take a lot for Korean chicks to wear heels with tight cut-off jeans. At the beach. Hey now.)

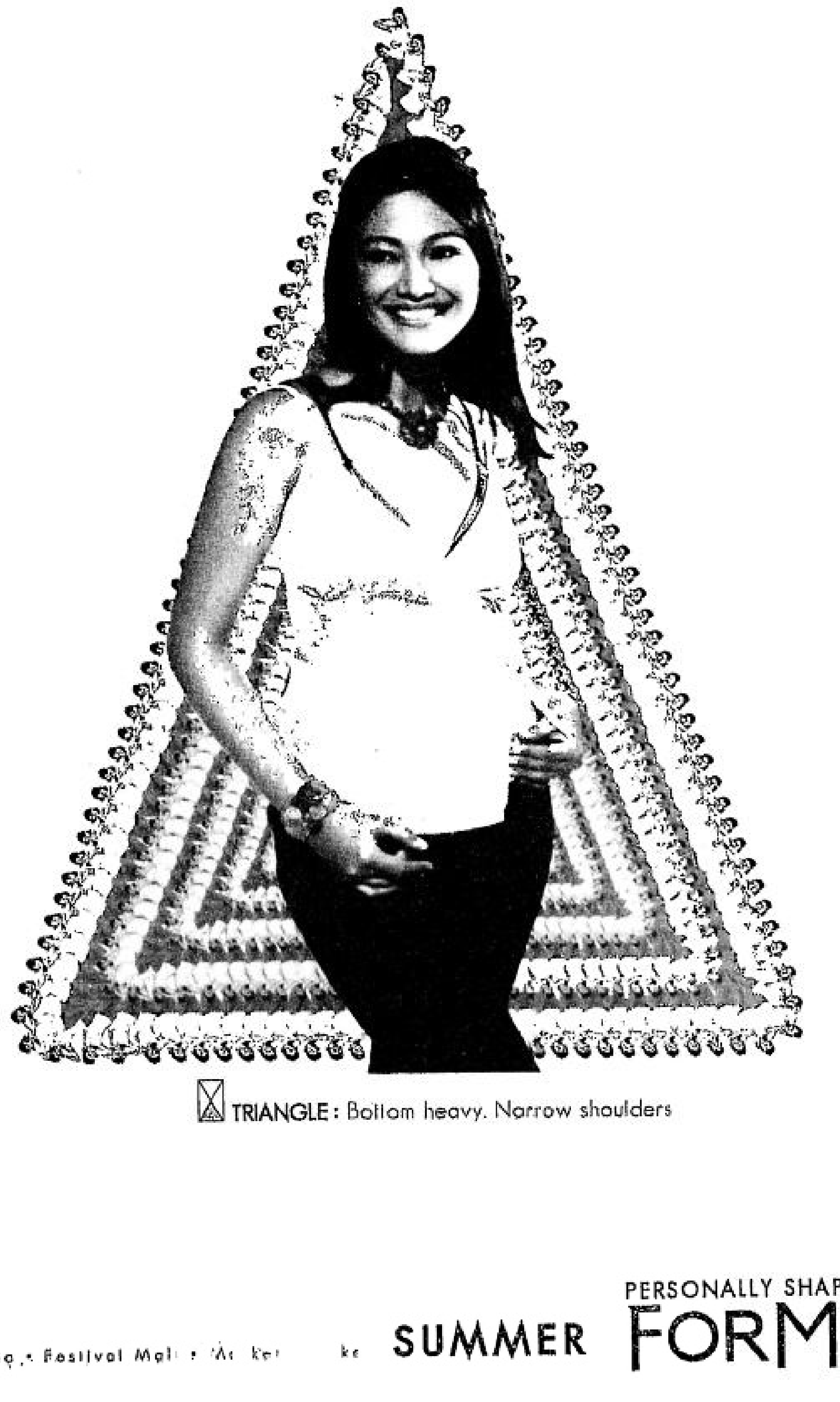
Off-color jokes aside, it looks like their collective wanderlust has yet to reach epic proportions. And that reason-defying riddle is not without its perks, especially for the Philippines. Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said that the target for 2005 is 500,000 arrivals from Korea. That's half a million sales pitches waiting to happen, billions of potential *pesoses* into the Pinoy piggy bank and, whoa, more kimchi enthusiasts that you can ever imagine. Think about it.



BRRR, it's cold in here. There must be some Koreans in the atmosphere. No seriously, this was how they sunbathed at Dos Palmas.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FHM/JOVEL LORENZO

RECTANGLE : Straight, from top to bottom.



TRIANGLE : Bottom heavy. Narrow shoulders

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One of the biggest mysteries that puzzle men about women is why it takes them such a long time to shop. But what men don't understand is that shopping is not that easy especially if you're a real woman, with a realistic body form. Fitting an item that caught your eye as you passed by a window display can be such a frustrating experience. And then you realize that the piece of clothing was on that mannequin for a purpose: that's exactly where it belongs--just on a mannequin, not on you. Not when the fit is so ridiculously unreasonable. Shopping can literally take shop after shop and fitting after fitting to finally find that one perfect top.

Shopping can be extra challenging now that summer is here when clothes are light and tiny and do very little to disguise your insecurities. But summer shopping doesn't have to be intimidating at all. In fact it should be fun! Don't let the soft, sheer material scare you, you just have to know what cuts and colors will work for you. And even that is now made easy. Because now there's ForMe, and ForMe always works for you.

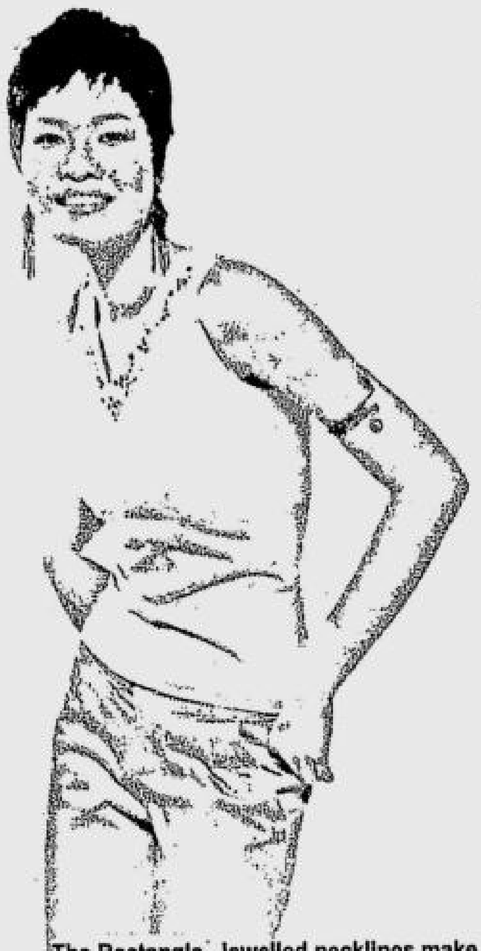
ForMe understands women. ForMe knows that women are not created equal--and yes we know, mannequins are poor copies of what actual women are. That's why ForMe carries not only a wide range of sizes but also a variety of cuts, colors, patterns and designs that flatter a woman. It tailor-fits its designs to fit a woman's specific body type. Depending on a woman's figure, ForMe adapts the placement of the different accents and modifies the cuts and colors to hide imperfections and highlight the woman's body assets--especially during the summer.

So when the heat is on celebrate your femininity! With the right attitude and the right clothes, you too can be sexy. Go ahead and dress down, flaunt your curves and hey why not even show off a little skin in clothes that are fresh and chic. For warm weather, look cool as you cool off in clothes that are stylish and flowing. Kick off those stiletto pumps, slip on some flip-flops, head for the waters, and line the beach in threads that are bright and breezy. Yes summer is definitely here ForMe and ForMe is for you!!! Oh happy days!!!

The Hourglass. Choose styles with fitted bodice and details on waistline.

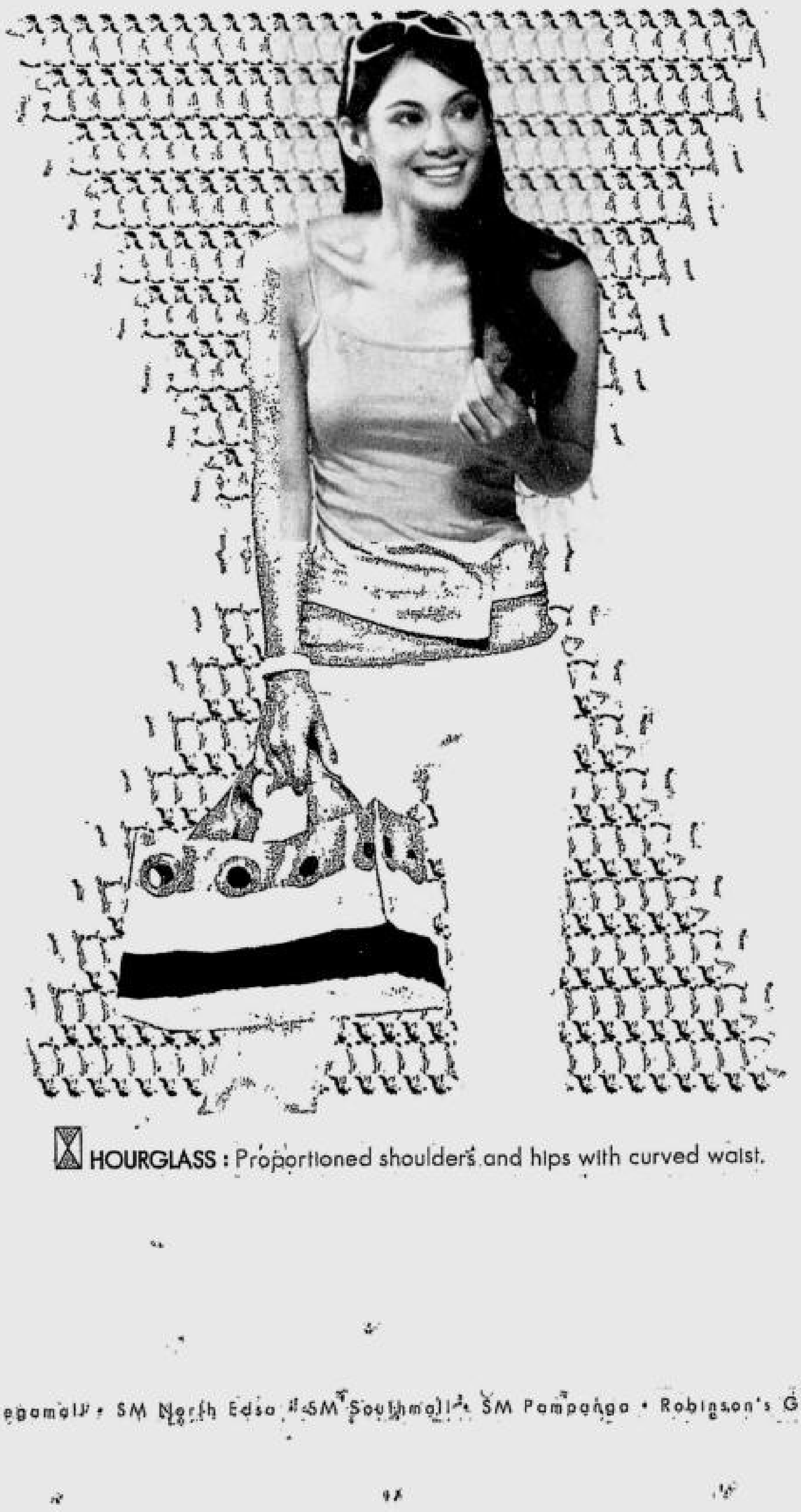
The Inverted Triangle. Go for necklines, waistbands and bright-colored bottoms.

The Triangle. Look best in empire cut, overlap tops and dark-colored pants.



The Rectangle. Jewelled necklines make the shoulders and neckline interesting.

ADVT.



HOURGLASS : Proportioned shoulders and hips with curved waist.

INVERTED TRIANGLE : Wide shoulders. Tapered bottom.

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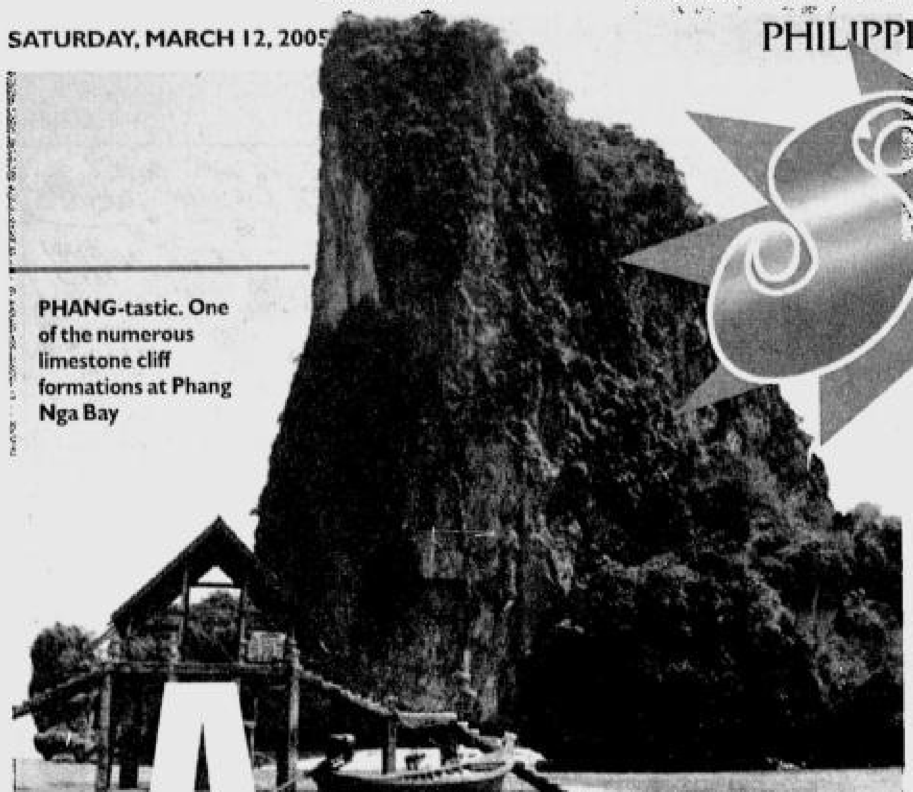

PHANG-tastic. One of the numerous limestone cliff formations at Phang Nga Bay

SUNLIGHT streaming in. One of the pools at Aonang Villa Resort.

A Thai-tanic adventure

I did not find ghosts of tsunami victims in Krabi and Phuket. During my four-day roller coaster ride in Thailand, I found strength, beauty and resilient hope

Text and photos by Pam Pastor

WATCH out for ghosts," my friends said when they heard that I was going to Krabi and Phuket, places that had been affected by last December's killer tsunami. Some even tried to persuade me to change my mind.

I was going to attend the Andaman Recovery program of the Tourism Authority of Thailand and Thai Airways along with about 800 other journalists and travel agents from all over the world.

For days before my departure, the jokers regaled me with ghost stories. Legless bodies floating on the beach, cab passengers disappearing, spirits posing for cameras. Pretty soon, my vision of Krabi and Phuket changed. I imagined dark deserted beaches tortured by the howling wind, haunted by lost souls. I imagined myself curling up under the covers, willing for the trip to end.

But that's not what happened. Far from it.

Krabi's air was sticky and warm on the night of our arrival. We drove straight to the Aonang Villa Resort, where we checked in and had dinner. The band was Pinoy, I was pretty sure, and one of the singers waved as we made a quick exit. The resort was surrounded by shops, restaurants and other resorts. We made a half-hearted attempt at shopping and met an interesting woman who sat on a red mat which she had laid out on the sidewalk. She made her living selling beautiful handmade shell necklaces. She couldn't speak English but we squatted in front of her, admiring her creations.

Unabashedly topless

The next morning, the dark beaches in my mind were completely erased by the beautiful sand, sparkling water and powerful sunlight. Deserted disappeared from my vocabulary. Because countless happy couples enjoyed their breakfast while looking out at the beach and a few hundred students from Sweden also milled about the place, wearing boardshorts, bikinis and ruffly pastel minis that would make Paris Hilton proud. A middle-aged woman was unabashedly topless while her husband sat on one of the deck chairs, seemingly embracing the heat of the sun.

We said goodbye to the resort early to visit Phang Nga Bay. We rode a long-tailed boat to Koh Ping-gan, admiring the limestone cliff formations on the way. Koh Ping-gan has been christened the James Bond Island because the James Bond movie "The Man With the Golden Gun" was shot there. According to Klang, our tireless tour guide, Pierce Brosnan did some stunts there too, for "Tomorrow Never Dies." "He jump from helicopter right there."

When we had taken enough photos of James Bond Island—and after I was able to haggle my way to buying a 450-baht necklace for 60 baht—we got on the boat again and went straight to Koh Panyi, the Sea Gypsy Vil-

A THAI-TANIC/ F3

NOT DUMBO. Enjoying the elephant ride during the Siam Safari Adventure

ISLAND, James Bond Island

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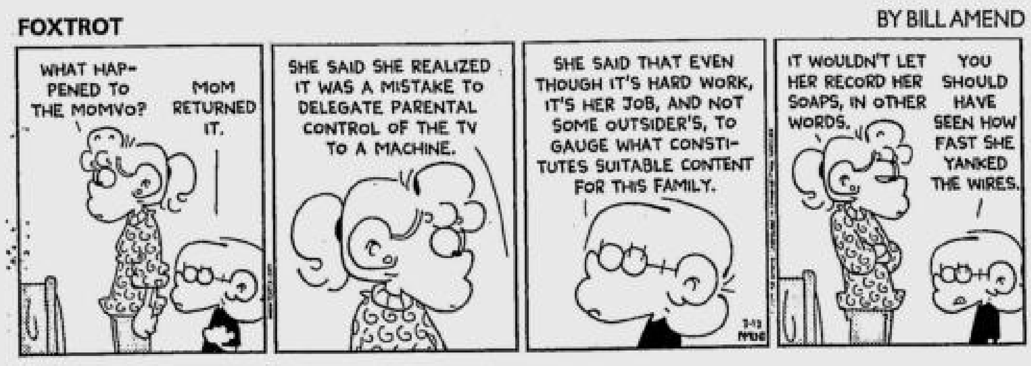
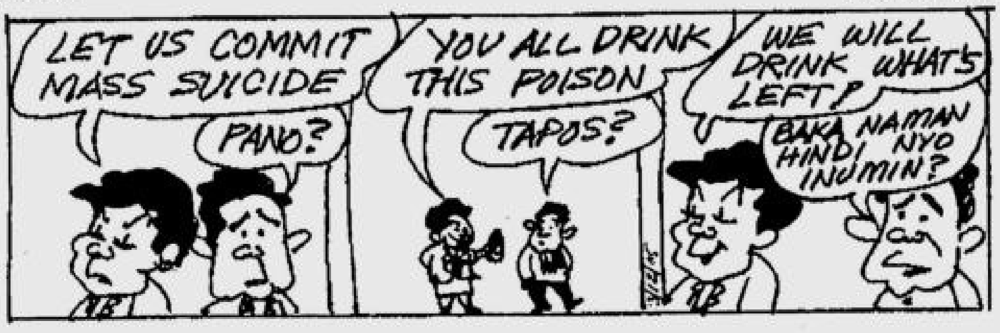
- SM City North EDSA
- SM City Manila
- Festival Supermall, Alabang
- Ayala Center, Cebu
- SM City Pampanga

www.healthyoptions.com.ph

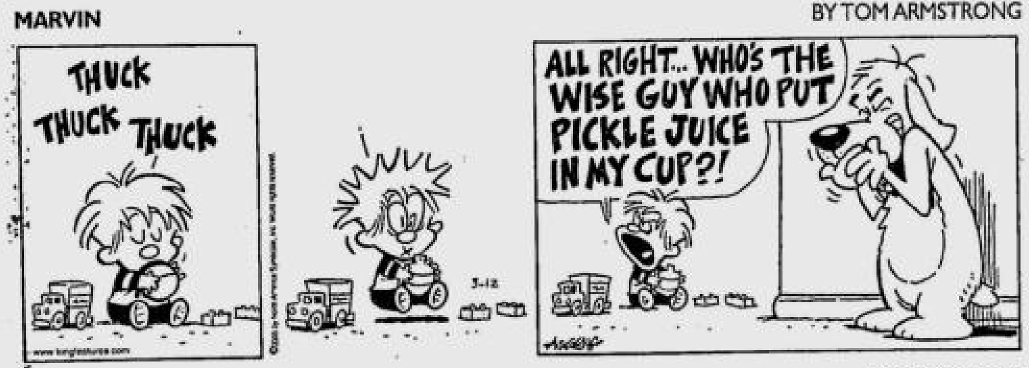
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MOMVO?
MOM RETURNED IT.
SHE SAID SHE REALIZED IT WAS A MISTAKE TO DELEGATE PARENTAL CONTROL OF THE TV TO A MACHINE.
SHE SAID THAT EVEN THOUGH IT'S HARD WORK, IT'S HER JOB, AND NOT SOME OUTSIDER'S, TO GAUGE WHAT CONSTITUTES SUITABLE CONTENT FOR THIS FAMILY.
IT WOULDN'T LET HER RECORD HER SOAPS, IN OTHER WORDS.
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HOW FAST SHE YANKED THE WIRES.
3-12

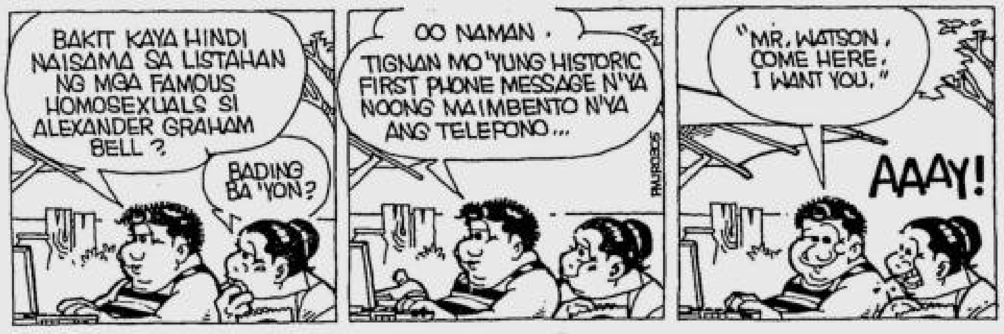
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


LET US COMMIT MASS SUICIDE
PANO?
YOU ALL DRINK THIS POISON
TAPOS?
WE WILL DRINK WHAT'S LEFT!
BAKA NAMAN HINDI NYO INUMIN?

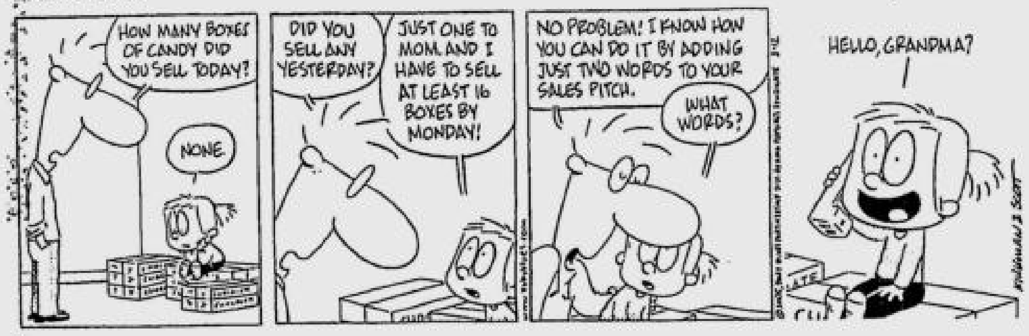
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


THUCK THUCK THUCK
3-12
ALL RIGHT... WHO'S THE WISE GUY WHO PUT PICKLE JUICE IN MY CUP?!

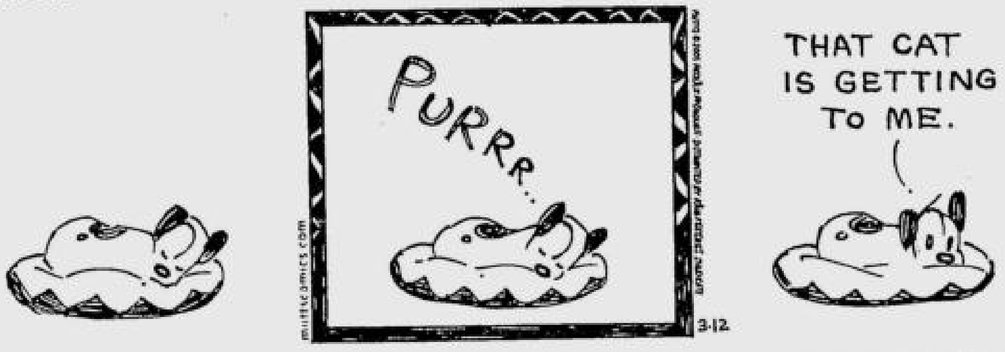
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


BAKIT KAYA HINDI NAISAMA SA LISTAHAN NG MGA FAMOUS HOMOSEXUALS SI ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL ?
BADING BA 'YON?
OO NAMAN.
TIGNAN MO 'YUNG HISTORIC FIRST PHONE MESSAGE N'YA NOONG MAIMBENTO N'YA ANG TELEPONO...
"MR. WATSON, COME HERE, I WANT YOU."
AAAY!

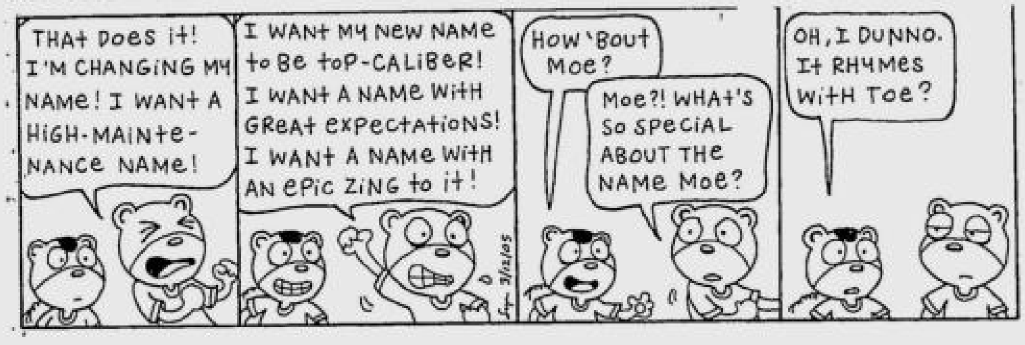
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


HOW MANY BOXES OF CANDY DID YOU SELL TODAY?
NONE.
DID YOU SELL ANY YESTERDAY?
JUST ONE TO MOM, AND I HAVE TO SELL AT LEAST 16 BOXES BY MONDAY!
NO PROBLEM! I KNOW HOW YOU CAN DO IT BY ADDING JUST TWO WORDS TO YOUR SALES PITCH.
WHAT WORDS?
HELLO, GRANDMA?

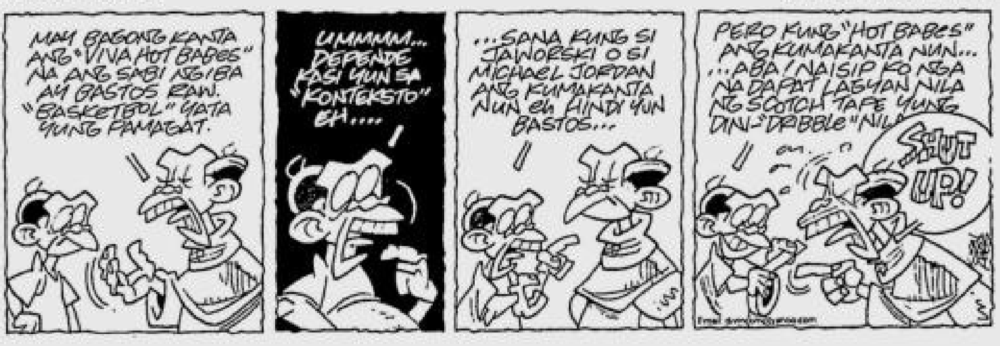
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


PURRR...
THAT CAT IS GETTING TO ME.
3-12

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


THAT DOES IT! I'M CHANGING MY NAME! I WANT A HIGH-MAINTENANCE NAME!
I WANT MY NEW NAME TO BE TOP-CALIBER! I WANT A NAME WITH GREAT EXPECTATIONS! I WANT A NAME WITH AN EPIC ZING TO IT!
HOW 'BOUT MOE?
MOE?! WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE NAME MOE?
OH, I DUNNO. IT RHYMES WITH TOE?

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


MAY BAGONG KANTA ANG "VIVA HOT BABES" NA ANG SABI NG IBA AY BASTOS RAW. "BASKETBOL" YATA YUNG PAMAGAT.
UMMMM... DEPENDE KASI YUN SA "KONTEKSTO" EH....
...SANA KUNG SI JAWORSKI O SI MICHAEL JORDAN ANG KUMAKANTA NUN EH HINDI YUN BASTOS...
PERO KUNG "HOT BABES" ANG KUMAKANTA NUN... ...ABA! NAISIP KO NGA NA DAPAT LAGYAN NILA NG SCOTCH TAPE YUNG DINI-"DRIBBLE" NILA
SHUT UP!

HOROSCOPE
BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Without question, you are daring, bold and intense. You reach out for life. You are probably multitalented, which means it's tough to choose a focus. You will boldly leap into a new situation, because you love novelty and new adventure. Work hard in the year ahead because your rewards will arrive in 2006.
Birthdate of: Jack Kerouac, writer; Liza Minnelli, entertainer; Courtney B. Vance, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is an excellent day for research. Dig deep to get to the bottom of anything that concerns you. You'll find your answers!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might have to confront the power of a group or some kind of collective today. Think about your goals; think about the group's goals. If they agree, fine. If not, leave the group.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You want to reform and improve relations with a parent or boss today. In fact, you're making changes to your overall long-term future and your career path in life.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You see the need to improve things related to higher education, travel, dealings with foreign countries and publishing. You want fresh solutions for old problems. (After all, there's always a better mousetrap.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Take a good look at your financial scene, especially with respect to deaths, taxes and insurance. Straighten these areas out to the best of your ability.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): If you join forces with others today, you can accomplish great things! Do not be critical. Don't try to make others over. (Don't let them do this to you, either.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You want to reform your working conditions or perhaps how you relate to co-workers. You see a better way of doing things. Furthermore, your new method cuts costs and boosts productivity. Wow!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Seize any opportunity that comes your way today to be able to use your creative skills—especially with children—for the greater good. Whatever you do today should benefit others as well as yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is the perfect day to clean up messy areas at home, especially related to garbage, basements, garages, dark places, bathrooms and plumbing areas. Just roll up your sleeves and do it.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You're very convincing in conversation with others today. You can persuade, influence, sell and market any idea.

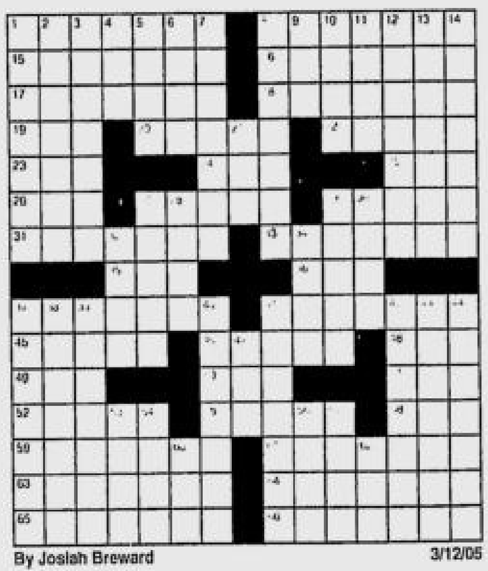
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You understand the power of networking. Today you see how to unite others to make changes better.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You're prepared to work carefully to investigate anything in depth today. You will get to the bottom of any problem that you're working on. (This is the kind of day when persistence pays off.)

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Learned one
8 Divide into equal thirds
15 Perilous position
16 Saki's real name
17 Buys back
18 Corralled, in a way
19 Bullpen stat
20 Brief, heated argument
22 Dumbfounds
23 Be ill
24 Coffee vessel
25 Go on snow
26 NYC arena
27 Color anew
29 Outer covering
31 Like April
33 Parodies
35 Serving of corn
36 Galahad's title
37 Massachusetts school
41 Public ways
45 Acclaims
46 Potpourris
48 Bikini bandeau
49 Hosiery
50 Chip off the old block
51 Pallid
52 Tacked on
55 Tentative guesses
58 Stashed away
59 Abjectly submissive
61 Pliable
63 Beatles song, "__ Rigby"
64 Bury again
65 Depression
66 Buck racks

DOWN
1 Little rivers
2 Hold dear
3 Minor Spanish noble
4 Indefinite pronoun
5 Untruths
6 Zenith
7 Cram for an exam, perhaps
8 Royal seats
9 Industrial suburb of Milan
10 Little devils
11 Cooking fat
12 Ultimate consumer
13 Form into many wrinkles
14 Throat guardians
21 Endeavor
27 Stands on hind legs
28 Makes mistakes
29 Begins moving
30 Add to staff
32 Undesirable plant
34 Concerning
37 Assumed names
38 1993 Nobel Peace Prize winner
39 Franklin's bill
40 Throwers
41 "Love and Marriage" singer
42 "Stuart Little" author
43 Clip before the flick
44 Barry or Delon
47 Grouped merchandise
53 Hunter or Connell
54 Sup
56 __ there, done that
57 State of agitation
60 __ Gatos, CA
62 Letters for Lorne Michaels' show



By Josiah Breward
Scranton, PA
3/12/05

Friday's Puzzle Solved

H	U	S	S		B	A	S	R	A		R	O	V	E
U	H	U	H		A	M	O	U	R		E	V	E	N
H	O	M	O	G	R	A	P	H	S		S	E	N	D
S	H	O	W	E	R	S		R	E	S	O	R	T	S
			E	N	O	S			N	O	R			
A	N	D	R	E	W		I	H	A	C	T	O	R	S
R	O	U	S	T		H	E	A	L		S	M	U	T
E	T	C			T	E	A	R	S			E	R	A
N	E	T	S		H	A	R	E		C	I	G	A	R
A	S	S	U	R	E	D	S		F	I	N	A	L	E
			B	O	O			M	E	R	C			
S	U	B	J	E	C	T		I	N	C	E	N	S	E
O	G	E	E		R	A	I	N	D	A	N	C	E	S
A	L	E	C		A	L	B	E	E		S	A	W	S
R	I	F	T		T	E	N	O	R		E	A	S	E

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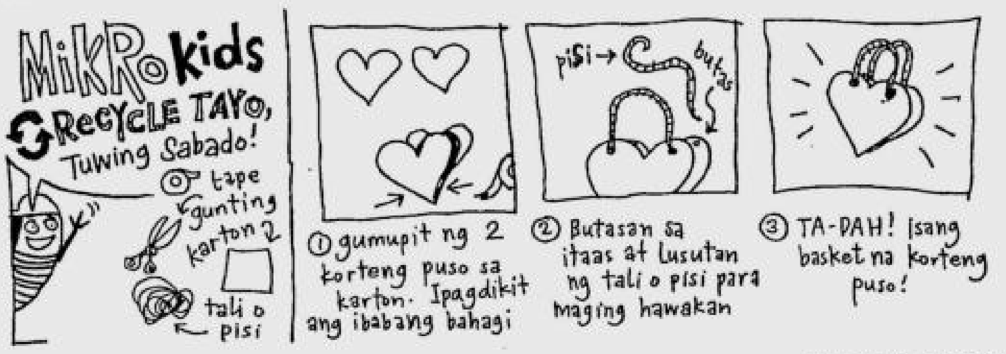
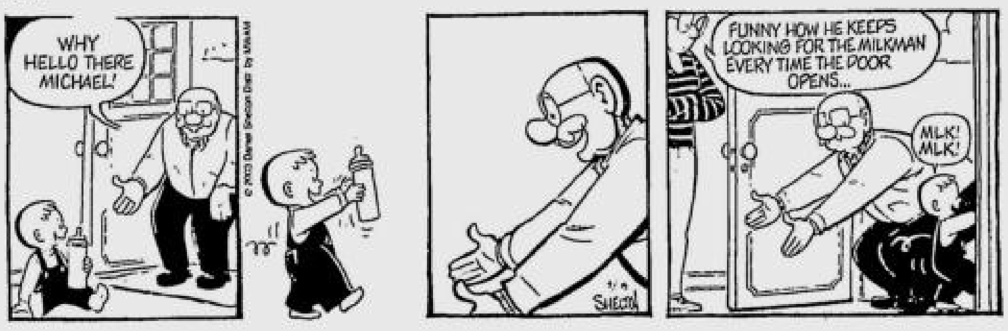
3/12/05

GASFAR
fuel saving tips
CLEAN FILTER AND CHECK FOR DIRT.
Regardless of mileage or time, a filter should be replaced before it reaches the point where it significantly restricts airflow. Fuel economy performance and emissions begin to deteriorate and get progressively worse until the dirty filter is replaced.

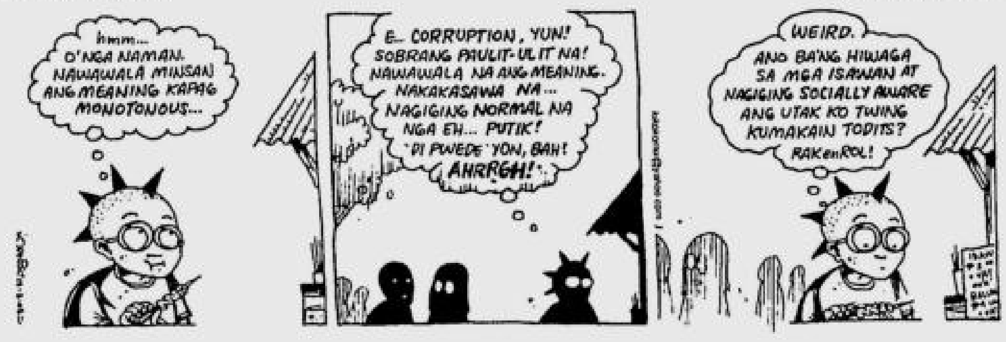
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


MiKRo Kids
RECYCLE TAYO, Tuwing Sabado!
tape
gunting
karton 2
tali o pisi
① gumupit ng 2 korteng puso sa karton. Ipagdikit ang ibabang bahagi
pisi
butas
② Butasan sa itaas at lusutan ng tali o pisi para maging hawakan
③ TA-DAH! Isang basket na korteng puso!

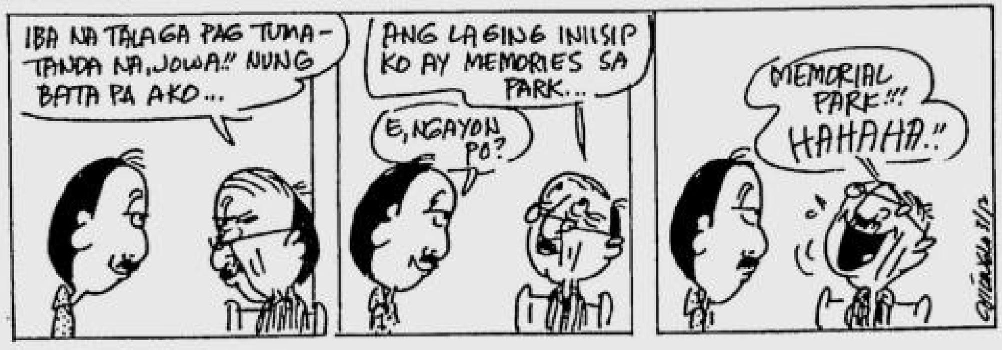
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


WHY HELLO THERE MICHAEL!
FUNNY HOW HE KEEPS LOOKING FOR THE MILKMAN EVERY TIME THE DOOR OPENS...
MLK! MLK!

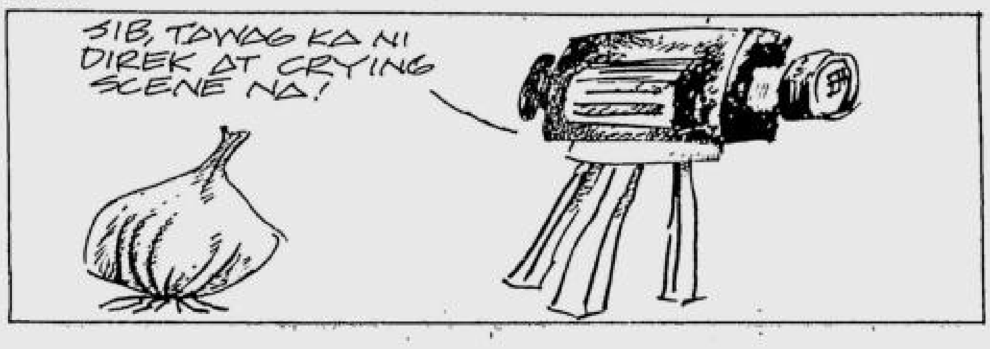
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


hmm... O'NGA NAMAN. NAWAWALA MINSAN ANG MEANING KAPAG MONOTONOUS...
E... CORRUPTION, YUN! SOBRANG PAULIT-ULIT NA! NAWAWALA NA ANG MEANING. NAKAKASAWA NA... NAGIGING NORMAL NA NGA EH... PUTIK! 'DI PWEDE 'YON, BAH! AHRRGH!
WEIRD. ANO BA'NG HIWAGA SA MGA ISAWAN AT NAGIGING SOCIALLY AWARE ANG UTAK KO TUWING KUMAKAIN TODITS? RAKenROL!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

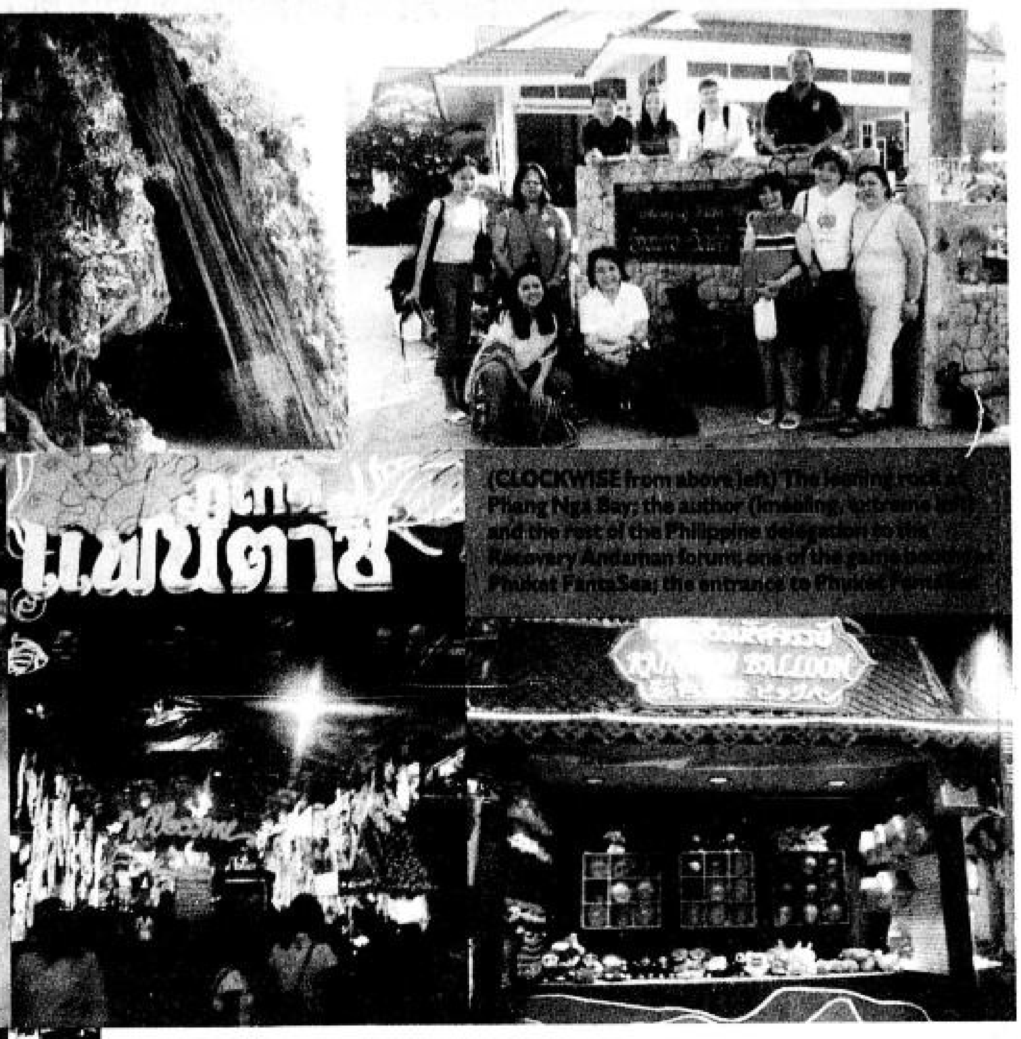

IBA NA TALAGA PAG TUMATANDA NA, JOWA!! NUNG BATA PA AKO...
ANG LAGING INIISIP KO AY MEMORIES SA PARK...
E, NGAYON PO?
MEMORIAL PARK!!! HAHAHA!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


SIB, TAWAG KA NI DIREK AT CRYING SCENE NA!

A Thai-tanic adventure

[illegible] (from left) Accessories galore outside Aonang Villa; shopping at the Loving Andaman Beach Festival; [illegible] at the Siam Safari. (Below) Aonang Villa Resort; [illegible] elephant ride (inset)



(CLOCKWISE from above left) The leaning rock at Phang Nga Bay; the author (kneeling, [illegible]) and the rest of the Philippine delegation to the Recovery Andaman forum; one of the [illegible] Phuket FantaSea; the entrance to Phuket [illegible]

From page F1

lage, where we had lunch. This quiet village of fishermen which doubles as a tourist trap was built entirely over water.

Our funky pink and purple bus gave us refuge from the sunlight as we sped away to Phuket, which would be our home for the next three days.

The staff of Kata Beach Resort greeted us warmly. After checking in, we made our way outside again. Our itinerary left a window open for exploring the nearby streets before getting ready for our next schedule.

The vibe around the Kata area was relaxed. Locals sped by on motorcycles and little trucks—not batting an eye at the tourists walking around in bathing suits and towels, their skin as red as lobsters.

Everything seemed so normal, so happy, so relaxed. Where was the damage left by the tsunami? I wondered. I was ready to report that there were hardly any traces. That if you hadn't heard about it, you wouldn't even know it happened. But the trip to Phuket FantaSea proved me wrong.

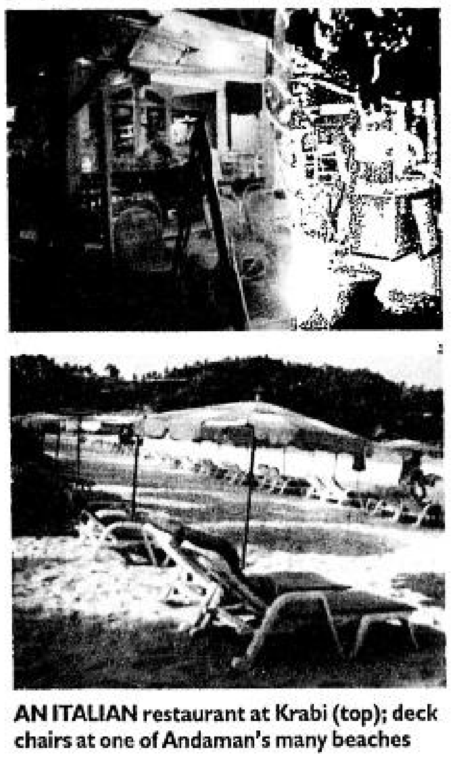
Evidence of horror

We passed by Karon, Patong and Kamala - beaches that had been swept by the killer waves.

I saw dead grass and dead trees. McDonald's and the Warner Brothers store were closed. Hotels were boarded up, a lot were undergoing renovation. The empty swimming pools were a picture of sadness. They were dusty and abandoned.

There were tourists on the beach, locals selling their wares. But evidence of that horrible day remained.

I looked out into the beach. The sun was setting and everything was tinged orange, purple and pink. I could hardly believe that the very same calm water had brought so much pain to so many people. I spent the bus ride holding on to the back of a seat, taking countless photos, my heart breaking with each click.



AN ITALIAN restaurant at Krabi (top); deck chairs at one of Andaman's many beaches

Chili hot links

Whether you want to go to Thailand for a visit or as a volunteer, these links will help.
Tourism Authority of Thailand: www.tourismthailand.org
Thai Airways: www.thaiair.com
Aonang Villa Resort: www.aonangvilla.com
Phang Nga Bay, James Bond Island and the Sea Gypsy Village: www.phuket.com/island/phangnga.htm
Kata Beach Resort: www.katagroup.com/k1desc.htm
Phuket FantaSea: www.phuket-fantasea.com
Phuket Hilton Arcadia: www.hilton.com
Siam Safari 4 in 1 Adventure: www.siamsafari.com/home.html
Club Andaman: www.clubandaman.com
Destination Asia: www.destinationasia.com
100 Days Tsunami Memorial by Tsunami Volunteer: www.tsunamivolunteer.net

The roller coaster ride had begun.

Phuket FantaSea, Thailand's cultural theme park, was a vision of joy. Orchid leis were placed around our necks and colorful characters greeted us enthusiastically, handing out sodas, nuts, popcorn, ice cream and cotton candy. Although cocktails were available for those who wanted a little kick, I was too busy gaping at the twinkling lights and the shiny buildings to think about drinking. Soon, supposed adult journalists and travel agents were reduced to hyper kids, queuing up and playing different games to win stuffed animals.

Massive buffet

Soon, our tour guides ushered us towards The Golden Kinnaree Buffet Restaurant. The place was magical. Everything was kissed by a soft blue light and the candles set everyone's faces aglow. A perky host tried to get everyone's appetites in gear by talking about the wonders of curry and tom yum. Truthfully, she didn't need to. The massive buffet was enough enticement.

When dinner was over, we all proceeded to The Palace of the Elephants for the state-of-the-art show. For the next hour or so, we were entertained by tales of drama and conflict, a flying half-bird half-woman, neon acrobats, tense battle scenes, comic Siamese-twin magicians, sixteen elephants, a herd of goats and a lot of chickens. The theater was amazing—it allowed for realistic cannon shots and rainfall.

The next morning, we headed to the Phuket Hilton Arcadia where TAT Governor Juthamas Siriwan and Thai Airways President Kanok Abhiradee gave heartfelt talks on life after the tsunami and the recovery program. One speaker said, "Pain remains in our hearts. Grief remains in our spirits. But we have a choice. Let pain and grief remain or let life go on. Today I pledge that life has to go on." Their message was resounding—the best way to help the people of Thailand rise after last year's disaster is go there on vacation. Swim a lot, shop a little and breathe life again into the local businesses.

It was also there that we met Mickey Howley, an American who decided to forego his plans of traveling to London and headed straight for Thailand after the tsunami. He's been in Khao Lak for a month now and has been spearheading the 100 Days Project, a memorial day inspired by the Thai belief that the spirits of the dead are set free 100 days after their death. It will be a celebration of the human spirit where people can enjoy expressions of creativity and renewal in various forms. After the forum, people crowded around Mickey, asking about his project and offering help. "He looks like a modern day Jesus Christ," I could hear the same sentiment echoed around me.

He wasn't alone in inspiring us. Our tour guide Klang had been involved with the rescue efforts. She had a lot of stories to tell. But she shook her head when I asked her about ghosts. "Anywhere in the world there are ghosts," she said wisely.

Riding on elephants

After lunch, we all piled into a big green 4WD jeep and braced ourselves for the Siam Safari 4 in 1 Adventure, an award-winning nature tour. When we reached the elephant camp in Chalong Highlands, we rode on elephants, watched them paint, play golf, play the harmonica and dance and fed them bananas after. Our hands were left sticky but it didn't matter. Rain started to fall. It was the first time it rained since the tsunami, we were told. Lucky us, we thought, but changed our minds as we ran in the pouring rain, shielding our cameras and mobile phones.

In the next couple of hours, we went deeper and deeper into the jungle, watching how rubber trees are cut to produce natural rubber latex, learning how to make jungle curry, posing with a water buffalo and seeing how monkeys are trained to pick coconuts.

A PUPPET at an old bookshop in Krabi (top); the coconut-picking chimp

Soon, we changed out of our safari outfits and into our beach attire. We were headed for the Loving Andaman Beach Festival at Patong Beach. By then, the skies had cleared. The crowd was growing and we had to jostle people to be able to check out the wares at the different booths. There were accessories, bags, clothes, home décor, incense and all kinds of souvenirs. When our feet hurt so much that we couldn't walk anymore, we headed for Club Andaman, which was partially damaged but still operating normally. Another massive buffet had been set up for close to a thousand people. We sat back and watched the fireworks before raiding the pasta spread.

It was our last night in Thailand and we wanted to enjoy it as much as we can. Dinner ended late and when the bus took us back to Kata Beach Resort, we went around for a final attempt at shopping and headed for 7-Eleven to stock up on lobster-flavored Ruffles.

The next day, we boarded our flight to Bangkok and looked at each other quizzically, after reading headlines claiming that the Loving Andaman Beach Festival had been cancelled. The rains may have put a stop to some of the activities but the place had been alive at night. We should know - we were there.

I sank back in my comfortable plane seat and after choosing between the coq au vin and fish in sweet chili sauce, I let my wander back to the past few days. It had been a real roller coaster of an adventure. The people I met and the places I saw awakened various emotions in me—sadness over their loss, happiness over their quick and continuous recovery, amazement at their unwavering hope and admiration for their love of country.

I left Manila expecting to find horror stories and eerie beaches. Instead, I discovered strength, beauty and resilient hope.

And the only ghosts I found were the ones in my head.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph.

"Brittania Rocks!" at Streetscape
Saturdays of March, 9:30pm-12:30am
March 5: Johnny Y Cash & The Jukebox
March 12: Evolution with Judith Banal
March 19: Retrospect

"25 in 2005"
Photo and memorabilia exhibit highlighting British Council's engagement with Filipinos through the years
March 14-20, Mall Hours
Level 1 Exhibit Area

The Philippine Sings

UP Singing Ambassadors (UPSA)
Special Concert
March 5, 5pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

"Philippine Children's Choir from Mandaluyong (Former Mandaluyong Children's Chorus)"
March 6, 5pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

"Johnny Alegre AFFINITY"
March 19, 7pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

welcome the New wave of British Bests at the shang
Shang celebrates 25 Years of Friendship between the Philippines and the United Kingdom

Talking Movies

"Bunso"
Invitational Screening of Chevening scholar Ditsi Carolino's award-winning docu on juvenile justice
March 14, Shang Cineplex

"Robots"
Animated movie starring Ewan McGregor, Adrien Brody and Keira Knightly
Screening starts on March 16
Tickets available at the Shang Cineplex

"The Jacket"
John Maybury's five-star thriller
Screening starts on March 26,
Tickets available at the Shang Cineplex

"Bata, Bata"
Year-end Recital of the Philippine High School for the Arts showcasing Theatre Dance with an interpretation of Ibong Adarna
March 20, 5pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

"Sport UK"
Billiards and Snooker Exhibition featuring the Cardiff World Pool Championship veterans with Billiard International Pro Shop
March 19, 5 pm
The 5th, Level 5

BRITISH COUNCIL Philippines
CRABTREE & EVELYN
Shangri-La Plaza

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

(ABOVE, from left) Accessories galore outside Aonang Villa; shopping at the Loving Andaman Beach Festival; curry lessons at the Siam Safari. (Below) Aonang Villa Resort, Havaianas go for an elephant ride (inset)

(CLOCKWISE from above left) The leaning rock at Phang Nga Bay; the author (kneeling, extreme left) and the rest of the Philippine delegation to the Recovery Andaman forum; one of the game booths at Phuket FantaSea; the entrance to Phuket FantaSea

From page F1

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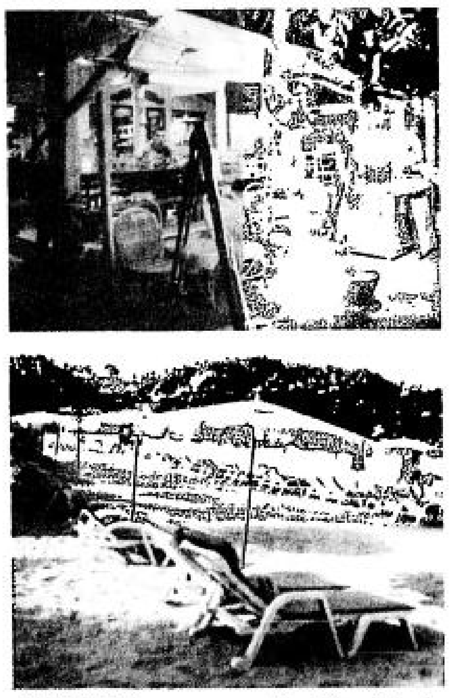
Evidence of horror

We passed by Karon, Patong and Kamala - beaches that had been swept by the killer waves.

I saw dead grass and dead trees. McDonald's and the Warner Brothers store were closed. Hotels were boarded up, a lot were undergoing renovation. The empty swimming pools were a picture of sadness. They were dusty and abandoned.

There were tourists on the beach, locals selling their wares. But evidence of that horrible day remained.

I looked out into the beach. The sun was setting and everything was tinged orange, purple and pink. I could hardly believe that the very same calm water had brought so much pain to so many people. I spent the bus ride holding on to the back of a seat, taking countless photos, my heart breaking with each click.


AN ITALIAN restaurant at Krabi (top); deck chairs at one of Andaman's many beaches

Chill hot links

Whether you want to go to Thailand for a visit or as a volunteer, these links will help.
Tourism Authority of Thailand: www.tourismthailand.org
Thai Airways: www.thaiair.com
Aonang Villa Resort: www.aonangvilla.com
Phang Nga Bay, James Bond Island and the Sea Gypsy Village: www.phuket.com/island/phangnga.htm
Kata Beach Resort: www.katagroup.com/k1desc.htm
Phuket FantaSea: www.phuket-fantasea.com
Phuket Hilton Arcadia: www.hilton.com
Siam Safari 4 in 1 Adventure: www.siamsafari.com/home.html
Club Andaman: www.clubandaman.com
Destination Asia: www.destinationasia.com
100 Days Tsunami Memorial by Tsunami Volunteer: www.tsunamivolunteer.net

The roller coaster ride had begun.

Phuket FantaSea, Thailand's cultural theme park, was a vision of joy. Orchid leis were placed around our necks and colorful characters greeted us enthusiastically, handing out sodas, nuts, popcorn, ice cream and cotton candy. Although cocktails were available for those who wanted a little kick, I was too busy gaping at the twinkling lights and the shiny buildings to think about drinking. Soon, supposed adult journalists and travel agents were reduced to hyper kids, queuing up and playing different games to win stuffed animals.

Massive buffet

Soon, our tour guides ushered us towards The Golden Kinnaree Buffet Restaurant. The place was magical. Everything was kissed by a soft blue light and the candles set everyone's faces aglow. A perky host tried to get everyone's appetites in gear by talking about the wonders of curry and tom yum. Truthfully, she didn't need to. The massive buffet was enough enticement.

When dinner was over, we all proceeded to The Palace of the Elephants for the state-of-the-art show. For the next hour or so, we were entertained by tales of drama and conflict, a flying half-bird half-woman, neon acrobats, tense battle scenes, comic Siamese-twin magicians, sixteen elephants, a herd of goats and a lot of chickens. The theater was amazing—it allowed for realistic cannon shots and rainfall.

The next morning, we headed to the Phuket Hilton Arcadia where TAT Governor Juthamas Siriwan and Thai Airways President Kanok Abhiradee gave heartfelt talks on life after the tsunami and the recovery program. One speaker said, "Pain remains in our hearts. Grief remains in our spirits. But we have a choice. Let pain and grief remain or let life go on. Today I pledge that life has to go on." Their message was resounding—the best way to help the people of Thailand rise after last year's disaster is go there on vacation. Swim a lot, shop a little and breathe life again into the local businesses.

It was also there that we met Mickey Howley, an American who decided to forego his plans of traveling to London and headed straight for Thailand after the tsunami. He's been in Khao Lak for a month now and has been spearheading the 100 Days Project, a memorial day inspired by the Thai belief that the spirits of the dead are set free 100 days after their death. It will be a celebration of the human spirit where people can enjoy expressions of creativity and renewal in various forms. After the forum, people crowded around Mickey, asking about his project and offering help. "He looks like a modern day Jesus Christ," I could hear the same sentiment echoed around me.

He wasn't alone in inspiring us. Our tour guide Klang had been involved with the rescue efforts. She had a lot of stories to tell. But she shook her head when I asked her about ghosts. "Anywhere in the world there are ghosts," she said wisely.

Riding on elephants

After lunch, we all piled into a big green 4WD jeep and braced ourselves for the Siam Safari 4 in 1 Adventure, an award-winning nature tour. When we reached the elephant camp in Chalong Highlands, we rode on elephants, watched them paint, play golf, play the harmonica and dance and fed them bananas after. Our hands were left sticky but it didn't matter. Rain started to fall. It was the first time it rained since the tsunami, we were told. Lucky us, we thought, but changed our minds as we ran in the pouring rain, shielding our cameras and mobile phones.

In the next couple of hours, we went deeper and deeper into the jungle, watching how rubber trees are cut to produce natural rubber latex, learning how to make jungle curry, posing with a water buffalo and seeing how monkeys are trained to pick coconuts.

A PUPPET at an old bookshop in Krabi (top); the coconut-picking chimp

Soon, we changed out of our safari outfits and into our beach attire. We were headed for the Loving Andaman Beach Festival at Patong Beach. By then, the skies had cleared. The crowd was growing and we had to jostle people to be able to check out the wares at the different booths. There were accessories, bags, clothes, home décor, incense and all kinds of souvenirs. When our feet hurt so much that we couldn't walk anymore, we headed for Club Andaman, which was partially damaged but still operating normally. Another massive buffet had been set up for close to a thousand people. We sat back and watched the fireworks before raiding the pasta spread.

It was our last night in Thailand and we wanted to enjoy it as much as we can. Dinner ended late and when the bus took us back to Kata Beach Resort, we went around for a final attempt at shopping and headed for 7-Eleven to stock up on lobster-flavored Ruffles.

The next day, we boarded our flight to Bangkok and looked at each other quizzically, after reading headlines claiming that the Loving Andaman Beach Festival had been cancelled. The rains may have put a stop to some of the activities but the place had been alive at night. We should know - we were there.

I sank back in my comfortable plane seat and after choosing between the coq au vin and fish in sweet chili sauce, I let my wander back to the past few days. It had been a real roller coaster of an adventure. The people I met and the places I saw awakened various emotions in me—sadness over their loss, happiness over their quick and continuous recovery, amazement at their unwavering hope and admiration for their love of country.

I left Manila expecting to find horror stories and eerie beaches. Instead, I discovered strength, beauty and resilient hope.

And the only ghosts I found were the ones in my head.

E-mail the author at ppastor@inquirer.com.ph.

"Brittania Rocks!"
at Streetscape

Saturdays of March,
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March 5: Johnny Y Cash & The Jukebox

March 12: Evolution with Judith Banal

March 19: Retrospect

"25 in 2005"
Photo and memorabilia exhibit
highlighting British Council's
engagement with Filipinos
through the years
March 14-20, Mall Hours
Level 1 Exhibit Area

The Philippine Sings

UP Singing Ambassadors (UPSA)
Special Concert
March 5, 5pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

"Philippine Children's Choir
from Mandaluyong (Former
Mandaluyong Children's Chorus)"
March 6, 5pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

"Johnny Alegre AFFINITY"
March 19, 7pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

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Shang celebrates 25 Years of Friendship
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Talking Movies

"Bunso"
Invitational Screening of Chevening
scholar Ditsi Carolino's award-winning
docu on juvenile justice
March 14, Shang Cineplex

"Robots"
Animated movie starring Ewan McGregor,
Adrien Brody and Keira Knightly
Screening starts on March 16
Tickets available at the Shang Cineplex

"The Jacket"
John Maybury's five-star thriller
Screening starts on March 26,
Tickets available at the Shang Cineplex

"Bata, Bata"
Year-end Recital of the Philippine
High School for the Arts showcasing
Theatre Dance with an interpretation
of Ibong Adarna
March 20, 5pm
Grand Atrium, Level 2

"Sport UK"
Billiards and Snooker Exhibition
featuring the Cardiff World Pool
Championship veterans
with Billiard International Pro Shop
March 19, 5 pm
The 5th, Level 5

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KEYWORD	TITLE	ARTIST
A6	Kiss Me	Sixpence None The Richer
A7	Bright Lights	Billy Crawford
A8	Rich Girl	Gwen Stefani
A9	What U Waiting For	Gwen Stefani
A10	Over	Lindsay Lohan

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A12	Let Me Love You	Mario
A13	Na Nana Na	Nelly
A14	Only You	Ashanti
A15	Caught Up	Usher
A16	Lose My Breath	Destiny's Child
A17	Wonderful	Ja Rule

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A1	Boulevard of Broken Dreams	Green Day
A2	Only One	Yellowcard
A3	Me Against the World	Simple Plan
A4	This Is Your Life	Switchfoot
A5	American Idiot	Green Day

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KEYWORD	TITLE	ARTIST
A19	These Days	Bamboo
A20	Nahuhulog	Sandwich
A21	Tulad Ng Dati	The Dawn
A22	Bakit Nga Ba	The Mongols
A23	Questions	Artstrong

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BALESIN-fatuation

Warning: frolicking around this fantasy island can lead to mental chillness

SO THE temperatures have soared north, a canvas of a cerulean sky out your window peers back at you temptingly, and it's an impossible feat to convince your companions that the growing sweat stain splashed across your T-shirt is really the map of Africa. Short of shaving your head and tearing out your clothes to run amuck through the air-conditioned byways of shopping mall complexes, you're dreaming of a *real* escape, to traipse barefoot and half-naked through the natural Shangri-Las of sand far away from the stress in the city. Yep, summer has arrived, and you're starting to feel beachy.

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

But as you're drawing out plans to hit our sun-drenched coastlines, you're then stricken with the malaise of everyone else getting that beachy feeling too. Suddenly, a mental image distresses you: the chimera of a human throng teleported during Holy Week to Boracay, transforming it into something more like a Babylonian circus, or Greenbelt Mall only with more coconut trees.

You shudder to think that you're bound to bump into the very people you wish to avoid: your boss, the gossipy old college classmate who knows more about your life than you do, that ubiquitous nocturnal barfly highly adept at mind-numbing small talk, or your ex who's now going out with your gay best friend. You realize that it's not exactly your idea of a true fantasy-driven flight of passage, and thus you're thinking of alternatives to the "It" island.

Well, guess what, there are about 7,000 other isles to choose from here in our little tropical space in the Pacific. Allow me then to formally introduce one of them, an island apart from the mainstream holiday menu. Switch your mental channels to Balesin Island. Hooray!

Sun of a beach

As most of my life has been punctuated by eternal Sanderlust, I was up for another island venture, albeit one that involved hopping on a cozy, single engine ChemTrad plane, to zip 40 minutes away from Manila into Balesin.

Peeking through the gaps of wild flowers and the fronds of coconut trees, were the mingling shades of turquoise waters touching the cloudless sky. It reminded me of a line from "Reef" by Romesh Gunesekera: "...to break out into a clear world beckoning from beyond the edge of their dreams, there to make at least a moment sparkle like a star in the night." Yes, to edit the drama, it is *that* beautiful.

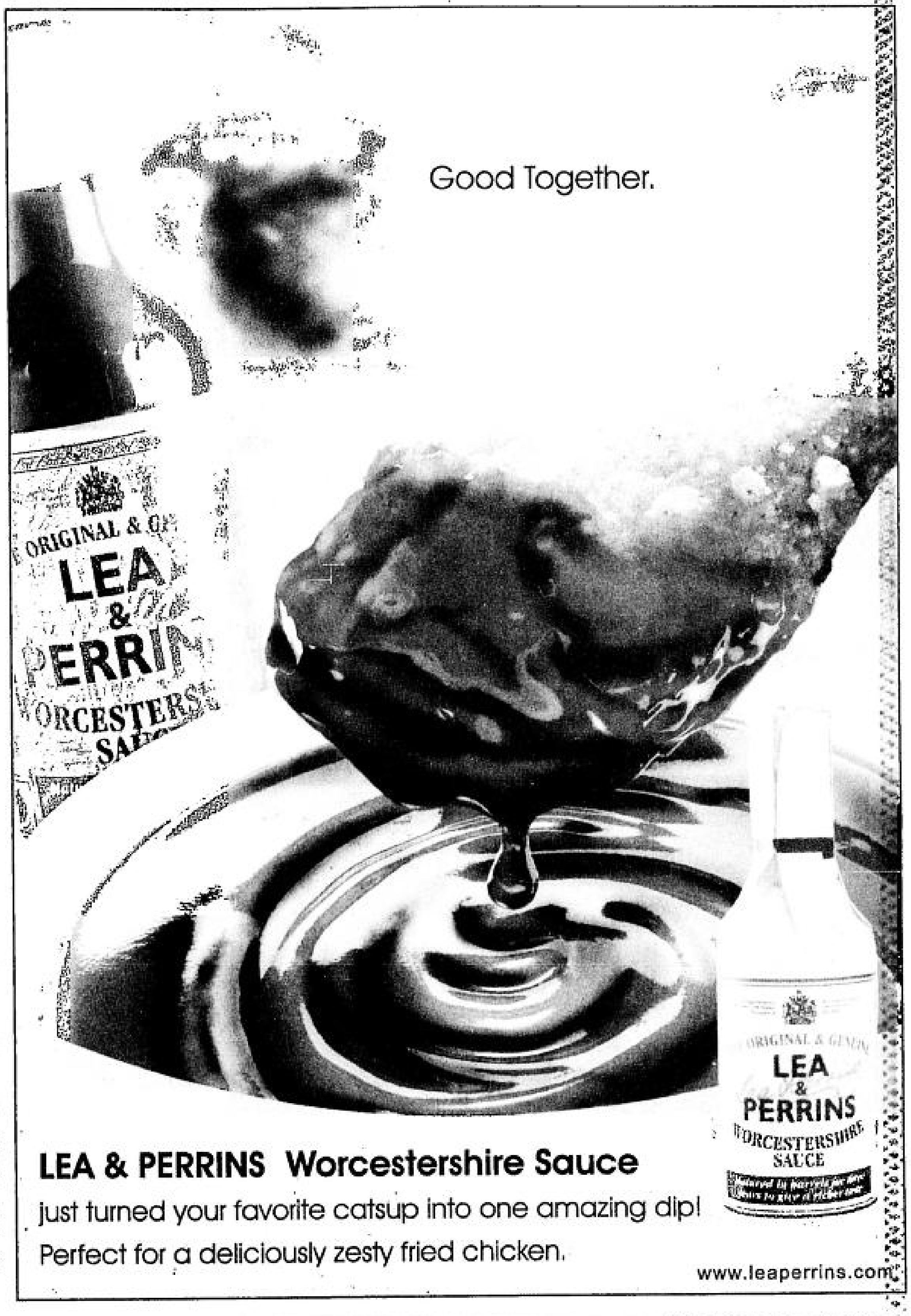
A nicely tanned Buddha would have fit in perfectly on this serene isle east of Quezon province, gently lapped on one side by Polillo's Lamon Bay, and sculpted by the Pacific Ocean on the other.

After casually picking up my jaw that dropped amongst the seashells washed along the coastline, I then tossed two of my beachcomber life's luxury items---my beloved Rudy Project wraparounds and well-worn Havaianas flip flops--- to a little space on the snow-white sand. The better to fling my bikini-clad self into the liquid sapphire waters in homage to the sun. Yes, it is *that* beautiful.

The best part about it all was that I could stare back at the beach from the bay and see no urbanites outdoing each other in the retarded artistry of making *pa-porma*, with no threat of being assaulted with lines like, "*pah-reh*, did you check out that chick checking me out? Wonder if she's on Friendster..." The only love affair is between you and nature. Now *that* is a

BALESIN/ G2

MAPAPA-hammock *ka sa sarap*!



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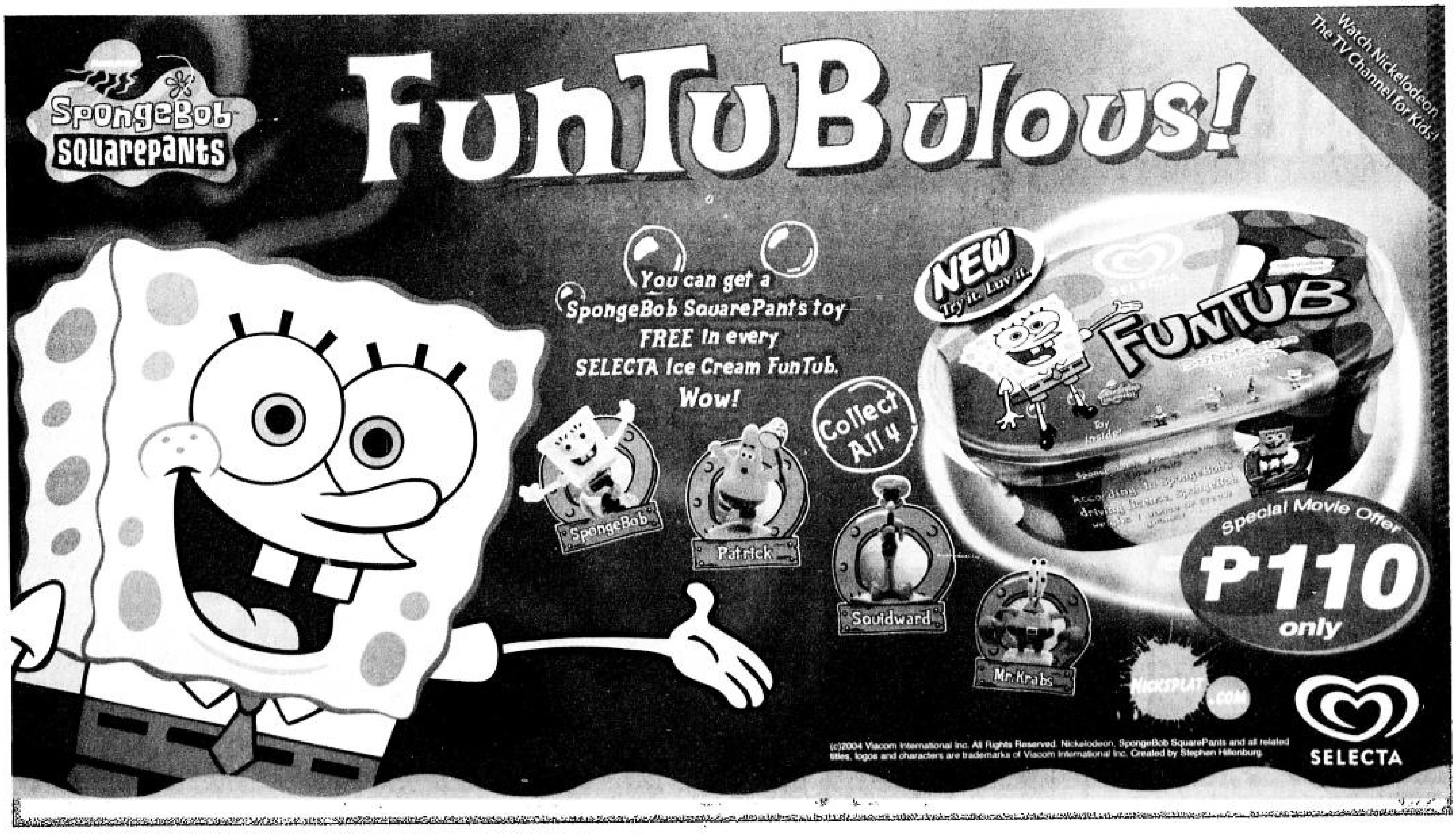

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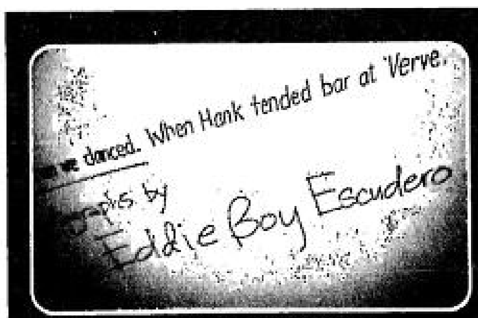
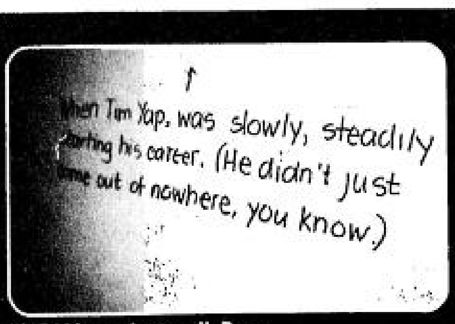
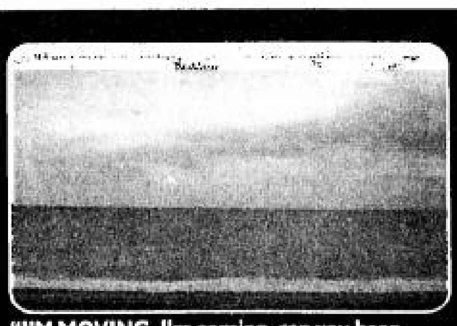


"THEY wrote on the walls!"–James


When Tim Yap, was slowly, steadily
starting his career. (He didn't just
come out of nowhere, you know.)
"YEAH, you know..."–Pepe


"I'M MOVING, I'm coming, can you hear what I hear?"–James

"DID MAHAL take this picture?"–Pepe

"IS THIS one of those s

The Diary of James and Pepe

(From hig

Text and photos by James Gabrillo and Pepe Diokno

JAMES: I was in White Beach in Puerto Galera with some friends when Tim informed me that he's going to pack mine and Pepe's week with parties.

Pepe: Parties! Luncheons! Plays! And orgies!

James: O-kay. So of course I say yes.

Pepe: He said yes, I said, "affirmative." I spent my whole Sunday in the Celebrity Club—where there were *no* celebrities, so of course I said yes. Anyway, James' life is more interesting—so...

James: I didn't want to leave the unbelievable waves of White Beach but I had to.

Pepe: James, stop. Actually, he was just on a set in ABS-CBN.

James: So with like, 30 minutes of sleep, I packed, and went straight to the first event—The Ralph Lauren Perfume Launch Party Thing Luncheon Vacation Soiree in Punta Fuego.

Pepe: And I couldn't come because it was that time of the month... for me to bathe.

James: The bus ride there was really funny—because the bus had Egyptian interiors and these cheeky chandeliers (which made an annoying sound every time we hit the humps). And when we had to stop to pee, we parked right beside a Korean tour bus that looked exactly like ours. And when people were coming back in, they got confused—"Hello Koreans—oops, wrong bus."

Pepe: I wish I was there—I know how to say, "Hi, my name is Pepe!" in Korean—wait, I mean Chinese.

James: So, you know, at the launch, we had unlimited free food and shakes and booze... and Cindy Kurleto and her MTV crew.

Pepe: They took a shot of him with like, 98 bottles of beer. James was then whooped by his parents.

James: No I wasn't! That night, there was this big party launch of Ralph Lauren's perfume called Cool—

Pepe: It's a perfume for 15-25 year-old girls who are (get ready for this) "surfer chicks." (I think surfer chicks would rather have sun block or aqua-shoes... or me.)

James: So to sum it all up, it was really... fun. Plus, the people from L'oreal who did the event were just so great .

Pepe: Was it wet and wild? Did you ride a banana boat?

James: Yes—but unfortunately, without Cindy.

Pepe: Ceendee Koorletoh. I love the way she pronounces her name. It's so German.

James: She's from Austria, right?

Pepe: Really? Never mind.

James: So the Punta Fuego thing was Monday-Tuesday.

Pepe: On Tuesday night, we went to Eddie Boy Escudero's photo exhibit called, "When We Danced."

James: After getting down the The Mummy Bus, I had to go straight to the Silver Lens Gallery at The Fort for the exhibit.

Pepe: There were so many artist-like people. (We have really funny pictures.) There were like, photos of people and boobs. (Y'all should see it—it's art.) The photos there are all ten years old—Tim was saying how nostalgic it was because they were pics of the party scene when he was still... not blonde.

James: When we came in, we learned an important lesson in Doing Society 101. You have to kiss everyone.

Pepe: Which is okay.

James: Eddie Boy's pictures were really cool—they were personal glimpses of the lives of these party people that we all see in these lifestyle sections.

Pepe: The funny thing is that these people—are actually people. Like, they're real. (I have just opened a new bank account, thank you, thank you.)

James: So Tim introduces us to, like, the entire population of Tokelau.

Pepe: One of the people we met was Budjette Tan, animator guy extraordinaire. (I don't actually know know him, but his name sounds so Budget-like, I feel like I do.)

James: He told us, "We sold out... you shouldn't."

Pepe: Then he cries and rolls on the floor. Just kidding. Budjette Tan wins Best Quote of the Week.

James: But among all the hands we shook and cheeks we kissed, there was one person who stood out.

Pepe: Not because her hands were wet or anything, but because she's the nicest person in the world—and she's a butter connoisseur...

James: Drum roll, please...

James and Pepe: Jer

Pepe: Okay, enough.

James: We go to din

in umm, where else but

Pepe: Which has rea

ally friendly waitresses

James: Oh yes. The b

Pepe: We should wri

bassy's butter.

An Open Letter to

Dear Embassy's Butte

What are you made o

in raindrops sent by Go

soil and dipped in cyani

We love you. We can

We had you two straigh

still lingers in our souls.

Amen.

Yours truly,

James and Pepe

PS. Jenni took you h

you were amazing. But

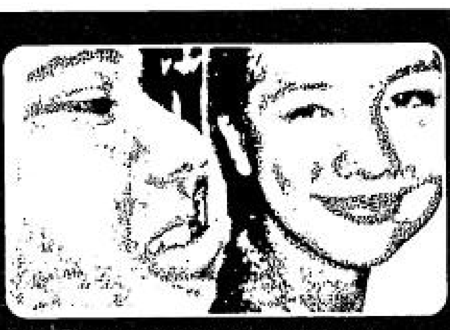
Pepe: Seriously, it's

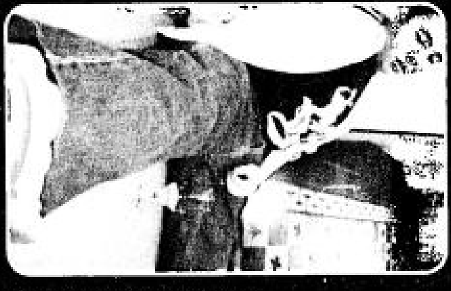
bassy. (Ooh, Super!)

James: That night w

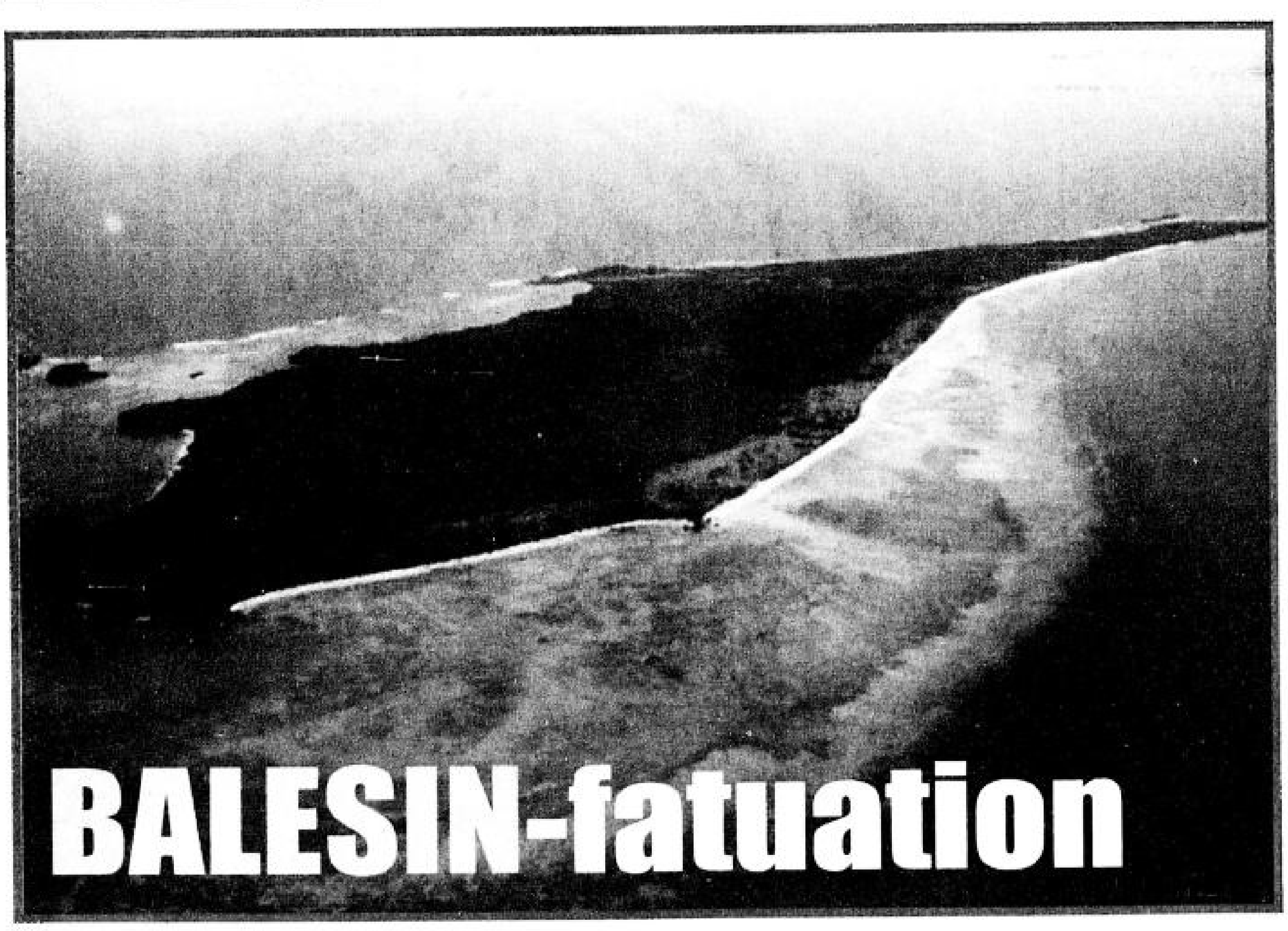
"OH LOOK—it's an arm!"–Pepe

"I STOLE one of those pictures."—Anonymous

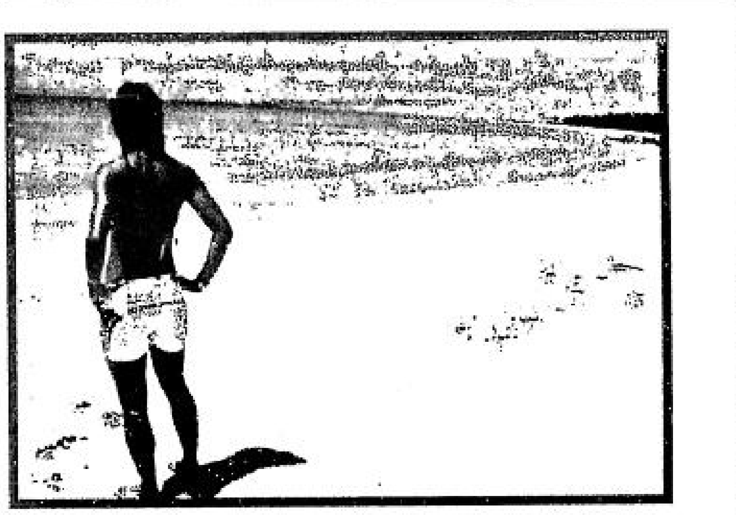

"I CAUGHT you licking Lopez!"–James


"I LIKE this picture."–Pepe

"I STOLE one of those r



BALESIN-fatuation


NOMAD is an island.

PANG-romansa!

From page G1

real getaway!

Hello, hedonists

Balesin island developed in the mid 1970s as an idyllic island-resort community tucked into a 424-hectare land mass, with a 7-kilometer stretch of coastline. It pioneered what is considered today as the "niche" or "spa" approach to resort development, and over the decades, it has attracted a host of European and East Asian tourists looking for an alternative, private hideaway away from the more tourist trap beach destinations in the Philippines.

Fish, fireflies and fantasies

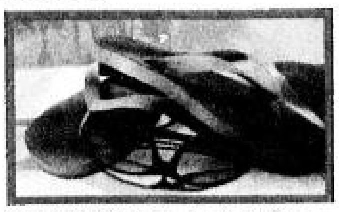
Balesin is blessed with an awe-inspiring sunset, the perfect addition to my growing mental snapshots of the last day's light. As the stars began to pierce the indigo skies, I started to wonder if "somebody put something in my drink" as the Ramones sang, for I could have sworn I witnessed the constellations falling on the island!

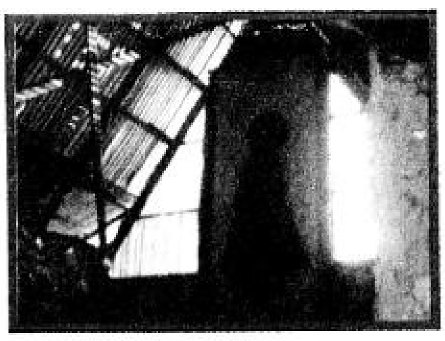
Nope, no potent hallucinogens in my rum coke, amigos, what I saw was actually a hypnotic gathering of fireflies, languidly swirling through the trees as if in conspiracy with the stars. Along with the sweet sea breeze, there wafted the lilting melodies of The Cocteau Twins to set up the most freakin' romantic dinner by the moonlight ever. As the fresh seafood dishes (starring the island's unique *kinilaw* specialty) melted in my mouth with each bite, I could not help but ask myself, why the hell didn't I bring a date???

But since my usual romantic getaway companion Gael Garcia Bernal was somewhere off in Mexico shooting his latest film, I simply made the most of my spacious cottage to unfurl my growing collection of suntan oil. I could just imagine honeymooners scheming with naughty designs upon sighting the quaint, beachfront wooden cottages sprawled nicely along lush grassy vegetation and rustic cabanas. I did find myself summoning a man to my quarters that night however... the resort's *masahista.* It was rub at first sight.

Perhaps too much sun exposure can lead to permanent mental chillness. Or the sight of fireflies circling about to visit you from the pages of your childhood past can make you forget to act your age. Or frolicking around this dreamy little isle really can impair one's ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. If that is so, then baby, bring it on!

For booking info, call 8108393, click www.balesin.com or e-mail info@balesin.com. Super! heaps of thanks to fly guy Cris Tordesillas and ChemTrad Aviation for chartered air service.


SALAMAT, Rudy... Project! Seen with my beloved Havaianas



BALESIN-ful. Scenes from the Pacific side...

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urfer chicks?"–Pepe

"THEY had these cool light stands..."–James

"YOU'RE taller than Cindy!?"–Pepe

"ARE YOU high!?"–Pepe

"STOP acting like a celeb."–James

h school to high society in a week]

ni Epperson!!!

ıer with Tim and Jenni
Embassy—
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ınd butter!
utter.
e an open letter to Em-

Embassy's Butter

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? Are you dug from the
le?
't have enough of you.
t nights and your taste

me last night. She says
vhat about us?!
Super! yummy in Em-

got to meet a lot of re-

ally real people—Kat Oligores, Steve Tirona, Kiko Escora, Ronald Pasion...

Pepe: I felt like a Pokemon catcher—"Look! Artist!"

James: It was cool to see all these artists gather (what a word) to honor the work of another artist.

Pepe: It was like seeing the Oscars... but more art-like, and sincere.

James: Kat is like the most insightful person I've ever met—we talked about life, ideas, friendships, astrology...

Pepe: ...and Kris Aquino!

James: Kat gives the best advice for free.

Pepe: Ronald sat down with us and talked about his work... with S-Files. We were so mesmerized... with his hair.

James: Now this dinner was also so cool because I'm a really big fan of Steve's and Kiko's works. They're just so much wit and edge in their art, it's intriguing where they get all their inspiration. Okay, I'm gonna stop now.

Pepe: He's such a big fan, he's on first name basis with them, just like I am with Geneva (who stopped to say hi to us and made sure she memorized our names before going to the Little Filipina Girls' Room... how sweet.)

James: Wasn't Geneva Cruz a part of Smokey Mountain?

Pepe: Really. So she's with Sharon Galvez, American Idol reject, who knows fellow American Idol reject Amanda Avila...

James and Pepe: Could she be Filipina?!

Pepe: Zero for the Filipino contingent this year, sorry.

03/09/05

James: The next night, we were back at Embassy for the launch of Hindy Tantoco's Culte Femme line.

Pepe: I felt like a Pokemon catcher—"Look! Model!"

James: There was a zebra skin-looking catwalk where the models strutted.

Pepe: It was my first fashion show. James has an interesting life, so it wasn't his first. Anyway—it was weird. Like, they just walk out and walk. What's the point?

James: Hey, it's art.

Pepe: Art doesn't make you feel fat. I was depressed the whole night. After seeing all those people, I'm never going to be a model.

James: I'm gonna have to ignore you for five seconds. So anyway, we drank lots of glasses of Baileys—

Pepe: I thought it was ice cream.

James: (Ignores Pepe)—and danced with Celine Lopez (who wins Best Dancer of the Week)...

Pepe: And I danced with girls who didn't know I was dancing with them.

James: (Ignores Pepe)—and, of course, with Jenni—

Pepe: Who tried to get us to dance. What am I saying? The truth is I didn't dance at all. I'm like a bubble boy.

James: Now, the real highlight of the night was meeting Maurice Arcache—

Pepe: Who didn't call us *palanggas*.

James: Anyway, he leaned over...

Pepe: ... and whispered to us...

James: ... like an angel...

Pepe: ... or devil, depends on how you look at it...

James: He said, "You have to beat Gino!"

Pepe: Which is of course impossible. Because Gino is the best. (I just opened another bank account. Thank you, Gino.)

03/10/05

Pepe: So after a night of semi-dancing and NOT drinking (I promise, mother), I woke up at 12 in the afternoon. I was so inspired by what Budjette Tan said, that I did my art—a piece entitled, "Budget."

James: While I have plans of crashing backstage at the Miss Hawaiian Tropic pageant—which is a sunblock lotion brand, right?

Pepe: It is?

James: Yes, it is. So...

Pepe: So...

James: Ah! Ending! These past few days have been fun. This is life—like, meeting people. It's like all this time, you've asked yourself, "Will I fit with this crowd?" and realizing it's not even an issue. Because the human race has this natural craving—an instinct to go out there, have fun, and just party with each other.

Pepe: To go from high school to high society means just to go out there and meet people. High society isn't a group—it's any group of people that's willing to go out and have fun. (And my bank account is still open...) Um... is this where the script ends?

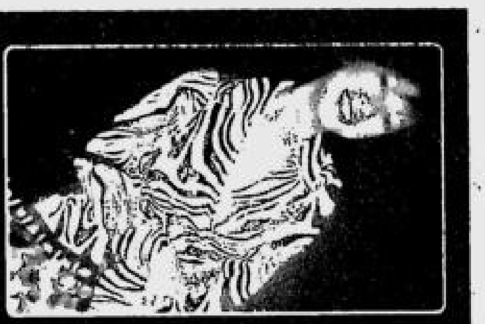
James: Who closed the teleprompter?

nodels."–Anonymous

"HEY, THAT girl looks so familiar..."–James

"ARE YOU drunk—again?"–Pepe

"I LIKE this picture."–James


"SHE LIKES butter."–Pepe

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One man's dream is to house thousands wisely.

"To lower the prices of decent condominium homes...to make it affordable to the emerging new generation that is our hope for the future."

This is the call Master Architect Gilbert C. Yu, founder and chairman of G&W Project Development Consultants, has decided to heed. And he has made it his moral and social responsibility to make sure that those who spend their hard-earned money in achieving one of their lifelong dreams will not be at the losing end of the bargain.

It all began in 1971, in a small, downtown office in Manila. There were three people who comprised the entire staff of Gilbert C. Yu and Associates. And later on, when Gilbert Yu was joined by his brother, the firm was renamed Gilbert C. Yu & Willie C. Yu Architects and Associates. Today, with over 30 years of experience under its belt, it is now better known as G&W Architects, Engineers and Project Development Consultants, and is considered one of the top firms of its kind in the Philippines.

Presently, the firm is a full service organization with interests in architecture, interior design, engineering and project management services. It currently has 5 offices in Metro Manila and one each in Hong Kong, Xiamen and Shanghai, China. And, it also has a staff of over 200 - a far cry from the 3 they originally started out with.

G&W is the firm behind such familiar buildings as Insular Life Corporate Center, SM in Sucat and Bicutan, Landmark Shopping Mall in Makati, Embassy Pointe, Manila Diamond Hotel, Immaculate Conception Academy, Xavier School, Evercrest Golf Club Resort, and Multinational Bancorporation Centre, among others.

But perhaps its biggest contribution to the housing and construction industry is a new method called the Build-To-Own (BTO) System. This new and innovative way of providing condo units was largely patterned after our neighboring Asian countries. Comparing the BTO system with the conventional method of buying a condo unit from a middleman developer reveals the latter's flaws. Architect Yu explains, "The present method of building homes and selling it to buyers is outmoded, inefficient, overpriced, over-borrowed and is selling mortgaged properties with no protection to the buyer. People who continue to push the old method of providing condos are totally forgetting that the main purpose of building homes is to house people comfortably and in the best locations, while keeping it at a price that they can afford." For Architect Yu, the BTO system is the best remedy for most of the shortcomings the real estate industry has imposed on the buyer during the mid-90's.

The main difference between the new BTO system and the conventional method is the elimination of the middleman developer. Why buy from a middleman developer when you can directly hire the same professionals that these middleman developers use on their projects? With the middleman developer eliminated, its corresponding overhead, marketing expenses and executive fees will be too, saving the buyer as much as 40% from the usual cost of buying a condo. What most condo needers do not understand is that when buying from a middleman developer, Php 40.00 of every Php 100.00 that they pay will go to expenses that are unrelated to building their condominium unit! With the new BTO system, buyers are given the opportunity to own prime, first-class, real estate property in the likes of Bonifacio Global City at 40% less than what it would normally cost, with even better quality, as evident in their Penhurst Parkplace project. Furthermore, BTO also protects the buyer from having his payments diverted to other purposes that are non-related to building their unit. This is because each unit owner deposits his payments directly to a depository and disbursement bank which is under the strictest orders to use the funds only for the project for which it was originally intended.

A perfect example of a first-rate property which successfully employed the Build-To-Own system is Penhurst Parkplace in Fort Bonifacio. Managed by G&W, the project started in 2002 and was finished in 2004, taking much shorter than the usual 5-7 years of pre-selling and construction as promised by the middleman developer. As of July of 2004, unit owners have already moved in and begun using their units. On the other hand, other condo projects in the area, which started at almost the same time as Penhurst Parkplace, are still far from being completed.

With the new BTO system, the real estate industry will never be the same again. And to ensure that it changes only for the better, Architect Yu has made it his personal commitment to see to it that this new method will prevent speculators from penetrating the real estate and housing industry in order to make housing affordable for the people who really need it. Architect Yu's passion is to make his company's expertise directly benefit the Build-To-Own unit owner. That's why he's laying his and his company's name and reputation on the line to make sure that the Build-To-Own unit owners get what they pay for at the time it was promised. After all people who need houses shouldn't be made to wait 5-7 years for theirs. Now, isn't that what building homes is all about?

Architect Gilbert C. Yu

PENHURST
PARKPLACE

A Build-To-Own
project in
Bonifacio Global City

G&W
G&W Architects Engineers
Project Development Consultants

Why we want to go to the Oscars

HAVING made his career debut in 1950s, Hollywood legendary makeup artist Mr. Shu Uemura has dedicated his life's work to women's beauty.

Inspired by the glamor and excitement of Hollywood, Shu Uemura's professional makeup, skin care and high-quality accessories are the favorite of many of the world's most beautiful and celebrated stars from Hollywood's Golden Age to today—from Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor to Nicole Kidman, Madonna, Oprah and Uma Thurman.

In honor of Hollywood's most prestigious artistic celebration, Shu Uemura was chosen by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences to be included in the official Oscar Gift Basket presented to performers and presenters at the 77th Annual Academy Awards rites held at the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood, California, last Feb. 27.

Shu Uemura's exclusive Red Carpet Lash Box worth over $1,600 includes a stunning array of the artist's award-winning products presented in a durable Red Makeup Box, offering the perfect selection of products for Red Carpet Events.

Both resilient and lightweight, this chic red carpet makeup box (P18,995) features a leather carrying handle and metal reinforced corners, ideal for frequent travelers to house their favorite Shu Uemura makeup and skin care products, including everything required to create show-stopping, beautiful custom-made mink lashes!

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Lucky Drew Barrymore, Halle Berry, Cate Blanchett, Orlando Bloom, Adrien Brody, Penelope Cruz, Kirsten Dunst, Salma Hayek, Charlize Theron and Renée Zellweger. And they're not the only ones.

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